

“That’s me when I’m angry”: seeking the authentic voices of pupils and teachers from inside a Pupil Referral Unit through autoethnography.

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Abstract

The research took place in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) located in a semi-rural town in the north of England where the author had taught pupils aged between 4 and 9, for over 5 years. This study took a social constructivist epistemological position with a focus on pupils and teacher interactions. An interpretivist approach to methodology was adopted to make sense of a variety of cultures from the micro culture of the Special Educational Needs classroom to the macro culture of Government educational policy. The author collected data from a small group of pupils finally focusing on three as case studies. Data were also collected in a detailed research journal. Clough's storytelling framework has been used in the writing (2002), to protect anonymity whilst keeping a sense of the reality of events mentioned. Initially an participatory action research approach was used and this led to paper based, visual and kinaesthetic activity data from pupils. Pupils had control over what they wanted to submit for the purposes of research. Due to changes in the pupil/teacher relationship and the pupils developing skills in using a variety of methods the research became more pupil led. Autoethnography was subsequently used drawing on a socio-cultural theoretical perspective to connect the stories of the pupils and teacher to a wider cultural experience (Ellis 2011).

The research highlights the importance of insider classroom research and the relationships teachers are pivotal in developing in order to facilitate authentic pupil and teacher voice. The importance of the role of the teacher in offering pastoral support, holding a holistic view of pupils, is crucial. There is a focus on pupil and teacher identity, especially in relation to a teacher/researcher, and the use of fictionalised narratives to share sensitive information. Conclusions are drawn about the need for researchers to be reflexive in relation to research design and subsequent fieldwork. The main conclusions demonstrate how a thesis can be used as record of teacher's and pupil's developing relationship journey, a broadening of the use of transportable identity and the value of insider research in education especially in relation to teacher knowledge and teacher/pupil voice.

Dedication

To Cait and Alex - may you always continue to love learning as much as you do now.

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A thesis is a journey that requires the support of many people along the way. I would like to thank Karen Laing, Dr Laura Mazzoli-Smith and Dr Elaine Hall for their support as supervisors. You each brought something fresh to our discussions and encouraged me to think and write radically, continuing to push myself to the limits of what I could achieve. I could not have picked a better group of intelligent, creative and interesting women to spend time with and learn from. I am ever indebted to you. I hope I have done you all proud.

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Finally to my family. Mum and dad: you have never been surprised at anything I have done and have supported me no matter what; my first and most treasured teachers. Last, and no means least, Paul. I have been writing this thesis, with its highs and lows, for the length of our relationship and for that alone you deserve my thanks. For your unending support, coffee and IT help I am eternally thankful. Love you.

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Prologue

The pale winter sun extended her still icy fingers across the sky in a vain attempt to transfer some warmth to the land below. The university building glowed a dull red in the setting sun. I sat watching the enfolding of the day from a cold corridor thinking about the conversation I had just had giving me permission to transfer from the M.ed course onto the Ed.D. My mind was filled with countless possibilities of where my research could go. Yet one thing was clear: if I was going to do a thesis I would do it properly and I had a very specific idea of what form it would take. It would be traditional and follow an accepted pattern. It would be a practitioner enquiry based upon answering a research question that has arisen out of my teaching experience. It would be well planned and meticulously executed.

The following thesis is an auto-ethnographic narrative based in a Pupil Referral Unit in the North of England. The research had the aim of highlighting the journey of permanent exclusion and its impact upon young children. Although the finished work is written in such a style, it was not the intention to write it in this manner. My aim was to write a thesis based upon the principles of action research as outlined by Kemmis (Kemmis, 1988). I envisaged that my thesis would follow this pattern of planning, acting and reflecting following the six steps that distinguish action research from other types of research (Altrichter et al., 2013). I aimed to develop a toolkit for teachers working with young permanently excluded children.

However this was not the way the research unfolded and instead it follows a classic story plot formula with the clear path of action giving the story a point and a purpose (Bader, 1945). The questions of *how* and *why* this happened form a focus of this thesis. My intention was to complete a piece of mixed methods research drawing upon the best practice of both the qualitative and quantitative paradigms (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). During the course of the research events occurred that changed not only the focus of the thesis but the way in which the research was conducted. This developing 'problem' became the turning point for the research. Rather than battle against the problems I was facing I decided to embrace them and follow the lead of the pupils involved through ongoing dialogue with them as highlighted by Langman (Langman, 1998) aiming to make broad generalisations

about their experiences. I also began to examine my own practice and what of myself I brought into the classroom. The following is the result of this journey.

The resulting choice of this auto-ethnographic methodology becomes crucial when one realises that it allows us to hear a single voice in depth something which traditional academic research is unable to provide. It enables me to use my own identity as a source of research through seeing my own life as story (Bamberg, 2011) in an interpretivist approach. However there are more characters than myself and include composite characters to aid the flow of the writing or to develop key concepts as well as fictionalised 'real' people; both are types of ethnographic fiction (Davis and Ellis, 2008) or fictionalised ethnography (Reed, 2011). These ethnographic fictions enable stories from the silenced and excluded to be heard (Sparkes, 1997). Some characters are composed of several real people, such as 'Erica' and 'Dawn', the supervisors, who are a combination of the three professionals who supported me during the thesis as well as purely fictional elements. Other characters are fictionalised in order to give them anonymity such as 'Charlie' or 'Brian' (Appendix A). Their roles form that of a critical friend (Herbert Altrichter, 2005). The work also makes use of other plot devices often associated with literature including leitmotifs to show the development of self awareness. All dialogue is fictionalised yet based upon real events; it is a means of showing my personal and academic development through the journey of the thesis. It should be noted that the use of speech marks is not to report exact speech but is part of a fictionalised narratives approach as is the sharing of sensitive information through story (Clough, 2002).

The journey contained within this thesis is just as important as any conclusions drawn from it due to the fact that the voices of teaching professionals are often hidden behind Government policy or union rhetoric. Although detailed accounts of teachers' lives exist (Goodson, 1994; Goodson and Numan, 2002) rarely is the lived experience of a teacher heard in any great depth by other teachers. Whilst trainee teachers and those undertaking career development read a range of academic materials (Zeuli, 1994), many teachers do not engage with research (Mour, 1977; Fruchter and Price, 1993; Borg, 2009). My previous professional engagement with academic material was fleeting; I never hunted out academic research to read for enjoyment - I was too busy being a teacher. Instead the voices of teachers are

commonly seen through news stories¹ popular blogs² or Twitter. With such recent research promoting the voice of pupils, it is staggering that the voice of the other member of that classroom relationship is often a silent partner. Therefore the purpose of this research is to explore and describe a teacher's journey researching pupil voice within a Pupil Referral Unit. The research will investigate how a teacher engages with the profession and the impact of their own identity upon their relationships with both pupils and other education professionals. The outcomes are methodological and substantive in terms of research questions with implications for practitioners relating to voice and identity. Methodological issues include how ethically sensitive information can be shared and the use of narratives within an education setting.

I made myself one promise: whatever happens my research will be about my class and our experiences; my motivation will start and end with them and our shared lives. I knew that I would need to keep myself grounded, real, authentically myself. I watched the sun begin to dip behind the metallic ribs of the hospital visible from my lofty perch. I trudged down the stairs, my echo resonating off the tiled walls. This was going to be some adventure. It was time to plan a route.

¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jun/16/ebacc-teachers-gcse-subjects>

² <http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/dec/30/best-teacher-blogs-to-read-2013>

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Jan 12	Feb 12	Mar 12	Apr 12	May 12	Jun 12	July 12	Aug 12	Sep 12	Oct 12	Nov 12	Dec 12	Jan 13	Feb 13	Mar 13	Apr 13	May 13	Jun 13

The new term had begun and I had met a new pupil and was trying to think clearly about the changes I would need to make in my KS1 classroom before he started in a few days time. I wanted to get it right for him but I didn't know enough about who he was to make such important decisions. I decided to get some breathing space but my mind was still distracted. Brian, the Key Stage 2 teacher, found me staring at the wall, "I'm just frustrated about how we know what's in the pupil's heads; how we know who they are; how we know what to do. We make hundreds of judgements each day based upon what we know and also what we feel." He looked at me silently whilst stirring his tea giving me space to continue. "We work in a Pupil Referral Unit with permanently excluded pupils across the whole primary age range dealing with the views and perspectives of Headteachers, teachers, Governors and parents."

I took a breath to give me time to gather my thoughts, "Where are the views and opinions of the pupils? Who are they? Some of my class are so young. Some of them have learning needs in addition to their Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. What do we really know about them apart from facts and opinions? The pupil's voices are missing from the exclusion paperwork although they are the subject of the document." Eventually he spoke, "I totally get your frustration. We have a huge gap in our knowledge about them despite the pages of information we receive. I gather this relates to your thesis proposal more than your medium term planning. What's your thinking?"

This time the words flowed quickly, "There are so many possible questions running around my head: What are their views on exclusion? How do they feel about coming to a PRU? How could excluding schools record the pupil's opinion? What matters to the pupils about their exclusion? I am not sure of the exact research question but the general theme is exclusion and pupil views. But first I need to have this discussion with my supervisors, they have been waiting for me to propose a research question

and I have struggled to think of one. This issue is such a huge part of my practice. I can't avoid it."

At the end of the day I emailed Erica and Dawn:

Hi you two,

It would be really good if we can arrange a supervision soon. I have had some clearer thoughts on how to go about my research and I want to discuss them with you. I want to do something about exclusion and perspectives but I am not sure exactly what. However I appreciate that my setting is rather unusual and I feel it is important to explain the context that this research will be in.

I work in a Pupil Referral Unit that caters for young people from KS1 - 4 and sometimes Reception too. There are two pathways in: Permanent Exclusion or Short Stay. Short Stay pupils remain on their school roll and come to us for a 6 week placement. Their school remains in close contact and they return with the hope that a permanent exclusion has been avoided. The schools are required to visit the pupil and to maintain close links. Some schools are brilliant at this and send letters and photos. Others do not visit at all and we have no way of enforcing it. In many cases the Short Stay placement is merely the precursor to a permanent exclusion and is almost used by schools as a way of buying time to build a case rather than repairing the relationship. Schools often want us to perform miracles and are surprised when the pupil comes back to them with pretty much the same issues. Short Stay pupils come in their own uniforms and we continually reinforce the message that they are only temporarily with us.

The main route into the PRU is through permanent exclusion. Government guidance says that, 'The decision to exclude a pupil needs to be robust, fair and defensible' (DfE, 2011) with the most recent advice requiring it to be 'lawful, reasonable and fair' (DfE, 2015). There is no definition of what these terms mean and they are therefore open to interpretation by individual schools. Schools have a legal right to permanently exclude and a responsibility to correctly inform the parents

and the governing body of the school. As long as they have lawful justification they are entitled to permanently exclude a pupil and the local authority has a responsibility to provide alternative provision within 6 days (DfE, 2011). In my Local Authorities' case, this meant a place with us. The excluding school are required to pass on information to us: the form outlining the reason for exclusion (this is where they tick the 'robust', 'reasonable' and 'fair' boxes), a copy of the letter sent to the parents and a very basic outline of their academic levels and wider needs. Largely our parents do not appeal although they have a legal right so to do; they seem very accepting of decisions made by schools. In 2010/2011 in the North East there were 240 exclusions across KS1-4 and of those 220 were recorded as being White British³. Pupils eligible for Free School Meals are four times more likely to be excluded (DfE SFR 29/2013). Therefore the vast majority of pupils where I work come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds with families who may not be in a position to appeal especially in such a formal and time limited way.

Our role is to re-engage these pupils and support them in moving to a new mainstream school. For some pupils this is not possible and we therefore look for a Statutory Assessment of their needs. Pupils largely stay at the PRU for two terms however more complex cases can stay for a full academic year. We offer a broad curriculum with targeted, personalised interventions for those in need. Although making academic progress is often possible, what is more important is the social and emotional progress that is made. This is the heart of what we do and our primary aim; academic progress is the positive by product of a successful placement. I can honestly say that a school has never referred a pupil to us and asked for the placement to support the young person in making the expected levels of progress. Schools are concerned with social skills, emotional awareness and the reasons behind the challenging behaviour they see. This might be because of an underlying learning need but, in these cases, we support schools in managing this. We certainly do not aim to fast track pupils through an intensive catch up programme to deliver

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/219222/sfr17-2012la.xls

them back to mainstream as fully adjusted and regular pupils! A lot of the pupil's needs continue after our support has ended; we are merely a link (albeit an important link) in a continuing chain of support.

Pupils come from across the local authority and the majority are therefore educated outside of their local community when they come to the PRU. Those who live over two miles away are eligible for free transport in a taxi which means that pupils can have long journeys. In primary we have sixteen places for those who are permanently excluded but this is not set in stone for we are the only PRU provision for excluded pupils in the county as all permanently excluded pupils must be in full time education within 6 days. In primary we offer six Short Stay places at any one time as our staff reintegrate those pupils back into their referring schools. This can mean that the leadership of the PRU's ideal ratio of 1:4 can often become 1:7 and classrooms that comfortably fit eight are forced to accommodate fourteen or more. This means there is less time to give pupils individual support. There is a non-teaching Assistant Head, two full time teachers, a Teaching Assistant who covers teacher's planning time and two Learning and Support Assistants. On the surface this is a comfortable amount of staff for 22 pupils. Yet if there is a behavioural incident then two staff are required to support the pupil which means that one class is then left with only one adult in often with up to 10 pupils. This is fine if you have a settled group but in a setting where all the pupils have behavioural concerns then it really is not fun! Plus if there is more than one incident then classes are merged in order to free up staff. More often than not we are understaffed at these moments. However there are also times, such as in September before permanent exclusions start being issued by schools, when we have hardly any pupils and my class of fourteen becomes four.

Being so unable to predict who you are going to have affects more than just staffing. One moment I can have three Year 3s following a Year 3 curriculum. In a matter of days I can have a low achieving Year 2, a Reception pupil and a high ability Year 4. All of these diverse needs have to be accommodated.

If a pupil is permanently excluded we are informed by phone with a confirmation by email. Paperwork is emailed across and an admission meeting held with the parents and the pupil; the child's school is not represented and plays no further part in their education. I often find a pupil in my class, often with sketchy information, and have to quickly build a relationship. Even if the information is detailed I am hesitant to take it as fact for it is only one source of evidence and we do not have any other sources of information to triangulate it with; it largely remains one person's perspective written for a specific purpose. The variety in the amount of information passed on is staggering as schools have different definitions of what they need to send as well as what behaviour constitutes an exclusion.

So, in a nut shell, this is my setting and the place where my research will take place. This is my job in all of its wonderful chaos and joy.

Hope you are both well. Let me know your thoughts.

Helen

Within a few days I had received an email back written by Erica and Dawn requesting me to sum up my thesis in a tweet.

Hi you two,
Here is my tweet:

The main voice heard at exclusion is the schools; how can I find the pupil's?

I need to spend some time reflecting on all of this!

See you soon,

H

Chapter 2. Methodology Part One

Jan 12	Feb 12	Mar 12	Apr 12	May 12	Jun 12	July 12	Aug 12	Sep 12	Oct 12	Nov 12	Dec 12	Jan 13	Feb 13	Mar 13	Apr 13	May 13	Jun 13

2.1 Research questions

I knew that the research questions I finally chose would likely guide and shape my research methods so it was important to be clear as to exactly what I was wanting to research. I also had developing beliefs that a mixed method approach was universally beneficial (Bryman, 2007) in spite of arguments against including questions of validity raised by Symonds and Gorard (Symonds and Gorard, 2008). The need to set definite research questions had plagued me; they had been elusive and had slipped away constantly out of reach; a metaphysical Tantalus.

I wanted to challenge the assumptions I perceived existed on what young people in a PRU were like rather than conduct a piece of research in order to exploit weaknesses in an existing theory to provide academic criticism (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011). I believed that most people assumed that young children in a PRU were naughty and possibly dangerous; this felt too simplistic. I felt certain that if I could understand why I was doing my job then I would be able to focus on specific research questions about pupil perspectives. There appeared to be a difference between convenience and altruism; between necessity and desire. I was aware that I needed to understand how I viewed the world and my place in it.

The class were not part of an ordinary school; they were here at the request of others, and had no say. They had all experienced not having their opinions heard and therefore it seemed crucial to find ways to capture their experiences. I managed to narrow my questions down: did the school's justification for a permanent exclusion match the experiences of the pupils? If not, how did they differ? And how was it possible to record young children's experiences in an age appropriate and ethically sensitive way?

I knew that, in order to answer these questions fully, I needed to fully immerse myself in their world, our shared world, and write about my experiences.

2.2 Ontological and epistemological interlude

I arranged to meet a friend for a drink at a coffee shop between our respective houses. Charlie was a particularly challenging friend and was able to see to the heart of an issue with apparent ease. Although his comments could be challenging they were asked out of a genuine interest and a desire to understand where his place in the world fitted with yours. Charlie was uncharacteristically late so I pondered what our meeting would bring.

Charlie arrived and almost inevitably the conversation took a deeper direction about why I was sacrificing so much of my personal life to do a doctorate. "What is the point in it?", he asked. I was unsure how to reply at first, but found my voice eventually, "Does the world exist in an external reality? Or do our interpretations give it meaning? If, like me, you think the latter, everyone has their own interpretation of the world. I want to understand my pupil's interpretation, and I suppose my own, of the world; to describe our experiences as Marton suggests (Marton, 1986). That and I think they are an unheard voice that has something to say." Charlie sat back in his chair and stretched his long legs out in front of him, "Why is giving space for their voices and yours so important to you?" Falteringly I spoke, "I guess it is a notion I have grown up with. My maths master at school was the great nephew of Millicent Fawcett a leading social activist (Rubinstein, 1991); he was a tangible link to a time when someone like me wouldn't have had my voice heard. I was always impressed by that fact - she was a real person; he shared her blood. I am interested in any group that doesn't have a voice heard; to not be heard is the same to me as not being valued. I may well disagree with what some say but I defend their right to say it. I suppose that I believe in freedom of speech for, as Smolla highlights, the opposite seems to be censorship (Smolla, 2011) although I would agree that his argument is often too clear cut (Tunick, 2014)."

The discussion journeyed towards the notion of my regret about not taking a further degree earlier as I had been offered a Masters in Intertestamental Judaism. "I look back and see a multitude of different Charlie's I could have been", he intoned, "and I look forward and see the same." I pondered his words applying them to my own life, "I know what you mean. There are so many people I could have been had things been different: if I had gone to a different school, if my parents had divorced, if I had

never seen a plane crash into a tower, if, if, if..." He smiled lost in his own library of memories. With growing confidence I continued, "We are never truly in control of who we are, we are constantly like a pebble at the beach rolled around by each ebb and flow of the tide. Who we are, our nature, is out of our control (Taylor, 2012)." Charlie looked at me quizzically, "You truly believe that? If that were so, we are mere animals, intrinsic nature shaped by extrinsic environment alone. But we are not. We have the ability to reflect; and to choose that which we would be. To compare and contrast, to select, to be inspired, to work against the forces that would influence us. We are driven by a complex piece of organic machinery that we know less about than the originals of the universe (Eagleman, 2011). Granted many are swept along, but not all (Baumeister et al., 2011)."

I did not have an answer as I was shocked as to how little awareness I had about these issues despite my ongoing love of the existential Christian philosophy of Kierkegaard, specifically his views on personal relationships, which I had discovered at university (Proulx, 2013). I was out of my depth. In order to stall time and gain some space I offered to refill our coffees. That thinking space was enough to give me some clarity. He was right. I had sounded too fatalistic and had not given grounds for free will and personal choice both of which mattered to me. Once again I was reminded of how little I had actually *thought* about the world around me at a deeper level; I seemed to have been too caught up in the present. Returning with fresh coffee I tried to continue, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1 v. 1 KJV)." I paused there thinking how much I loved the opening to John's gospel. "What?" He exclaimed with a laugh in his voice. "You quote a passage that implies the completeness of Jesus, fully divine and fully human. Are you saying that we too are born complete? That we are predestined to be who we will be? That life will not change us? I thought we had just been through all of this?" I smiled, "Yes, life does change us, that wasn't what I meant. I mean we can never be more than our nature permits; Jesus' nature permitted a lot." Charlie laughed. I felt empowered to continue, "I wasn't talking of existentialism then. Bear with me. The translation of *logos* as 'word' is open to interpretation. It could mean 'thought' or 'knowledge'. That knowledge is out there, but not in the sense that it is out there to be discovered like hidden treasure." Charlie frowned, "I cannot understand the logic of that. So what do you mean?"

I shifted uncomfortably, "Focus less on the words and more on how and why they came to be. We build that knowledge, we name it and give it life (Garrison, 1995), a constructivist approach, John was constructing his groups' understanding of their reality knowledge, logos, was synonymous with Jesus. To Mark's group, Jesus was 'the Son of God'. Their view of Jesus was different but it meant something to them, to the image of Jesus they had created and held central to their shared vision."

Charlie frowned, appeared to be about to say one thing and then changed his mind and spoke again. "Ok. So just as people are constructions of their society, so is knowledge; we build knowledge, we make sense of what we see and hear and create an understanding (Palincsar, 2005). Our collective 'buying in' to those ideas is what we deem to be 'understanding'. Is that right?" It took me a while to process what he had said, and then I nodded. "Yes, but those constructions are not fixed. We are continually building knowledge. I read a book at university about how Jesus was viewed differently as time progressed, the view of John or Mark did not stay set (Pelikan, 1999) for Martin Luther King, Jr., and others in the civil rights movement saw him as a peacemaker and symbol of nonviolence something distant from his original interpretation. The peace activists' construction of Jesus came out of their world view. That's how I see life. Societies construct meaning and individuals are therefore affected by the society in which they live. The words of the gospel did not stay 'theirs' but were free to be interpreted in a multitude of ways (Derrida, 1978). I am wanting to construct meaning from my research with my class and to be able to describe their ideas of our shared world (Marton, 1986). I suppose I mean a form of dialogism where I am taking a constructivist approach to data collection; constructing the reality of my research through dialogue with my class (Coulter, 1999). This is based upon my understanding that I am taking a relativist ontological stance and that the situation and context of my research will impact how I will act, what I will find and how I will present it. This means that my data will be co-constructed with my pupils and will be based in the specific space and time of my classroom within the Pupil Referral Unit; what happens within those four walls will effect my data. It is a common ontological view within the teaching profession (Schraw and Olafson, 2008) and it allows for a plurality of realities (Richard K. Coll, 2000). This is crucial as I am not intending to claim that I know the absolute truth of my pupils, nor that what I discover would be the same in a similar setting. I am offering instead the truth as I find it."

As usual in our conversations I felt like a small child; I could never explain exactly what my heart felt and I felt in awe of the quickness of his mind and his confidence in being critical. "Ok, I understand that, but how does that relate to our starting point: why are you doing this thesis? You have talked about the constrictions it places on your personal life and the solitary nature of research. So why?" With greater confidence than I felt, I started, "So our words form our reality and we build the world in which we live with others in our society; we form agreements about our values and morals, we create the world around us giving each element a name like the God of Genesis. We interpret the words we build together and those which lay hidden in our psyche and we generate understanding and wisdom (Whorf et al., 2012). I suppose that because I am more of a constructionist than a realist means I do not believe that the world is to be discovered and that our perceptions play a limited role (Barad, 1996), rather we create understanding through experience. Who we are affects what are actions are and ultimately the words we use. How we see ourselves is often a product of how we perceive that others see us or what we hear others say about us; we internalise what we see and hear about ourselves and turn those stories into our own words therefore making them our own; we can live the stories that other people construct for us; they affect how we interpret the world (White, 2007)."

He nodded and gestured for me to continue. "I see this every day. I see young children living lives shaped by the world they live in; shaped by a fourth generation out of work in closed pit villages; shaped by an expectation of what it means to be a 'man'; shaped by domestic violence or neglect (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan, 1997). Who could they have been? Who might they become? And what role do I play in unravelling that life thread? We may be affected by societal structure but we have personal agency (Archer, 2003); I believe that my pupils can rebel against society if they believe that they can and develop the skills to do so. So I am doing this thesis out of curiosity; I want to understand their world; describe it and share it. I want people who read my thesis to see the potential in the pupils I teach and the need to support them in achieving their dreams. The sharing also has an intrinsic value of its own as knowledge leads to understanding (Kvanvig, 2003). The influences of James, Piaget and Vygotsky continue to shape my understanding of my own metacognition and that of my pupils and what it means to be 'at home' in ourselves (Fox and Riconscente, 2008); this is the heart of it for me: I want to understand what my role in developing this sense of being 'at home' is for my pupils." The

conversation stayed with me as I drove home and I thought about what really made me 'me' and what really made my pupils who they were.

2.3 Methodology part one continued

I rang the bell and there was Erica to greet me ushering me into the kitchen. "Tea?" I nodded and smiled. I awaited the approaching social difficulty of how I liked my tea for at some point I had given the impression that I drank it and didn't take sugar. I was now trapped by my own lack of confidence. My tea arrived sugarless and dark.

The arrival of Dawn signalled the start of our meeting. The questions began, with Erica teasing out what was lying behind the words I was saying, "Thank you for the email with the tweet. So, can you sum up with any more clarity what you think your research will be about?" I shifted in my chair uncomfortably and looked at my notebook as if the answer would be found hidden on the page. Falteringly I explained that I wanted to find out what the pupils thought about exclusion and how it was possible to capture their thoughts. Erica quickly launched into a barrage of questions with a devilish grin on her face, "Who is your audience? What purpose will it serve?" I looked at Dawn for support but she merely took a sip of her tea and returned my look. I understood: I needed to step up and be a researcher. "I was reading a book about how to conduct action research in the classroom and I agree with the authors that it would be useful for other teachers in similar settings, to share my experiences and to provide some practical knowledge to help others understand how their pupils felt (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). For that reason I want the pupils to be full participants in the research; I don't want the research *done* to them but I want it done *with* them (Heron and Reason, 2006) I want them engaged in research and part of the process. Whilst I appreciate that my research is not a cooperative inquiry I would argue that Heron and Reason's general principles of reflection, inquiry, radical epistemology and transformative action are all possible within my research (Heron and Reason, 2006).

I read an article about an international symposium debating what action research was (Altrichter et al., 2002). One of the main researchers wrote a handbook for action research and I like a lot of the ideas about engaging with subjects; I can see me using them (Altrichter et al., 2013). However I am conscious that I do not want to colonise the pupils and the stories they might tell (hooks, 1992) instead I want to

make sure that we work together through collaboration to create co-constructed research so that their voices are authentically heard (Todd and Nind, 2011; Nind and Vinha, 2014). This methodology has been used with those identified as having learning difficulties which is an important factor to be taken into consideration given the needs of my class (Nind, 2009)."

Dawn finally spoke, "So if you want them fully engaged with the research how do you intend to do that and be a full time teacher?" I felt back on safe territory, "It seems logical to fit the research around the 6 half terms of the school year and I can use parts of my PSHCE lessons for gathering data from the whole group as well as 1:1 time that I can arrange in the afternoon with myself and a pupil when the rest of the group are engaged with topic activities. Altrichter, whose academic studies have included teacher research (Altrichter et al., 2013) discusses four stages of research that can be worked through with a loop circling between stages 3 and 2 so that there was space to review and redesign a research plan if needed (Altrichter et al., 2013). This means that the research will be cyclical and would fit in with an action research model that would allow me to complete a spiral of research (McIntyre, 2008) between September and July. However I am mindful that my role as a full time teacher may hinder my research validity as Delpit reminds us there is a tendency for some teachers to perceive that they know everything about a situation (Delpit, 1988)."

I sat back relieved, but Erica was not finished, "So are you intending to instruct others with a definite outcome especially in light of your awareness that you are representing a single view?" I attempted to answer, "No. Not at all. Action research is often criticised for not contributing to the wider body of knowledge as it often does not generate answers (Burnes, 2004). I disagree as knowledge can also come from learning and reflection (Davison et al., 2004). I am fully prepared to reflect upon my own practice, to see where I have been successful but also be open to investigate when I was not in order to improve my skills (Hammersley, 1993). My aim is to generate knowledge which would be beneficial not only to my own personal practice but to others who worked with pupils in a similar setting or from similar backgrounds (Marshall, 2001). I have a belief that the pupils are not consulted or fully aware about the implications of their exclusion but I want to form knowledge through a constructivist approach about my experiences too (Cooper and Hutchinson, 1997), (Braud, 1998) although I don't want to limit my research to this. Instead Kvanvig agrees that it is possible to form our own understanding but takes it further to say that

others will be able to as well (Kvanvig, 2003) and I agree with this in principle. I don't intend to say that I have all the answers but that I can draw general conclusions through an interpretivist stance about how best to approach working with excluded pupils if you want to understand what they feel. I think the voices of pupils in PRUs, so called disaffected pupils, should be heard and they have something to contribute to the wider story of education as discussed by (Riley and Docking, 2004)".

Dawn took her glasses off and rubbed the lenses as she spoke, "So, how do you intend to find out what they feel? Have you got any initial ideas as to how you will approach it?" Again I felt on safer ground, "I have been highly influenced by some of the modules I have taken in the taught stage of the course and especially by Pupil View Templates, PVTs, (Wall, 2008a) which I used for an assignment with a previous class. However I am concerned that the written nature of the PVTs may be off putting to some of my current class due to their struggles to engage with learning, or be impossible for some to complete who are working at P Levels and have not yet reached National Curriculum levels and do not have a high cognitive ability. I haven't been able to find any research about their use with special needs learners so it might be interesting to try. Personally I see PVTs as a semi-visual method because of the requirement to write however I am confident in using them and my staff are familiar with them too. However I am quite keen to look at visual strategies that are entirely visual. Using children's drawings as data has been the focus of research for several decades including how important images are for not only understanding concepts but storing information in the brain (Kosslyn et al., 1977). I brought a book by Sarah Pink and I appreciated so much of what she said about the strength of visual methods as they are especially useful for working with children (Pink, 2013) and, as a Special Needs teacher, I use visual methods every day from laminated table help cards to visual timetables and Makaton signs; these are not semi visual but are entirely visual. Visual methods in ethnographic research have become popular in recent years (Cremin et al., 2011; Pink, 2013).

The variety of visual methods is huge but I am going to ask the pupils to photograph areas of our building that matter to them so that I can begin to understand how they feel about being in the PRU environment. I do not agree that the photos need to be interpreted in an abstract way, separated from their context. Instead I am offering an interpretivist approach, exploring what the photos say about a specific situation; to understand explicit rather than theoretical knowledge, a difference highlighted by

Bohnsack (Bohnsack, 2008) for these photographs may have multiple interpretations depending upon the perspective of the person interpreting them. I do acknowledge the centrality of the researcher in photographic methods (Prosser, 2008) however I also value the centrality of the 'researched' who have control of the camera.

Therefore I believe that photographs can be the starting point for reflection and the sharing of perspectives (Kaplan et al., 2011); a place where myself and the pupils can meet with photos used to aid discussions. Photographs had been successfully used by Alison Clark as part of her 'Mosaic Approach' to understand very young children's perspectives (Clark, 2005b).

I have also been interested in some of Vygotsky's ideas especially around the Zone of Proximal Development and the importance of matching tasks to current and possible ability. I believe that visual methods are therefore suitable for my class but also kinaesthetic methods that are concrete and not requiring abstract thought due to some of their cognitive abilities (Vygotsky, 1978). The value of kinaesthetic methods is also seen in how play can enable a child's consciousness to change⁴. The importance of play and the imagination had been well discussed (Vygotsky, 1933) and it was this research that formed the basis of much of the later research on the role of kinaesthetic activities in research with young children (Edwards, 2011). I feel I can incorporate my research into our existing play sessions and I have some experience in using Fisher Price figures and Lego in therapeutic conversations, something that I have developed in my own practice, and I am keen to explore the use of kinaesthetic methods in a formal way like LeGof did when working with pupils who had autism as he found that the familiarity of the toy was motivating and rewarding for pupils (LeGof, 2004). This view was supported by Pimlott-Wilson's use of Lego Duplo in researching domestic roles where the familiarity with the bricks normalised the research process (Pimlott-Wilson, 2012). There are draw backs with kinaesthetic methods as it maybe harder for the researcher to control the situation and keep the research on track as pupil' play may develop away from the researcher's intention (Pimlott-Wilson, 2012). However Pimlott-Wilson's used Duplo to research a specific question, my intention is to reflect back for others what the pupils have shared in a particular time and space; to use interpretivism to highlight the contingency of the classroom setting. Therefore the use of kinaesthetic methods is only one way of trying to explore the pupil's perceptions and attitudes In summary

⁴ VYGOTSKY, L. 1933. Play and its role in the Mental Development of the Child. *Voprosy psikhologii*, 1966, No. 6;.

a combination of visual and kinaesthetic methods had been frequently used in research with children (Linzmayr and Halpenny, 2013) including those with Special Educational Needs (Freed and Bursztyn, 2012)."

Erica suggested a break for tea. I was glad of the chance to refocus my mind. As the obligatory tea was poured, Dawn spoke, "You are prepared for your research growing and developing aren't you? It is good to have a plan and an idea but don't be surprised if things change slightly; there are many different factors that can affect research." I pondered this as I sipped my unsweetened tea, "I do understand that. I mean, one of the kids could leave or a new character could join that changes the feel of the classroom. I just need a basic plan in place and to keep the research focus on my class; I don't want to do research that is woolly or narcissistic (Krizek, 2003) where people end up writing as some form of therapy. I can't stand things that are that self-centred or self indulgent (Sparkes, 2002).

Erica rejoined the table and the conversation, "How do you intend to share all of this with your audience? Will you simply anonymise the pupils? What about any staff?". I knew where to start, "I have thought of that. I intend to use a Clough's idea of a 'storytelling methodology' (Clough, 2002). He has been criticised for claiming to see beyond the stories he presents and understand them as if he were omnipotent (Badley, 2003), his initial justification for the fictionalised stories is what I intend to do where the stories I tell and the characters they contain are narratively true where validity is based in the assumption that what they say and do could have happened (Clough, 2002). The people in my research are real people: pupils, teachers, friends and academics. I want to preserve the identity of anyone in my research and therefore there will be a blend of amalgamated characters as well as fictionalised ones. However any person in my research will be 'real' as they are based upon the data I collect even if their presentation is fictionalised which Campbell suggests is a way for widening the lens on educational research so that the complexities can be seen (Campbell, 2000a). There is also an ethical element as it is also a means of respecting the research relationships that I have with the pupils and those I work with so that I can respect their right to tell their story and their right to be protected (Reed, 2011)."

The unspoken question hung in the air: where do I go from here? We continued to chat and they advised: reflection, reading and time.

2.4 Being a researcher

I began to feel some trepidation about my seventh year in the same classroom but the research had enlivened me and appeared to be having a therapeutic effect upon my practice (Haynes, 2006a): I felt that I was stepping outside as a Newly Qualified Teacher again full of inspiration, high hopes and a sense of purpose. Where others had failed, I would return victorious being able to clearly express the views and perspectives of young children excluded to a PRU. I would design a neat and clear research plan with key dates identified and a variety of methods used and clearly evaluated. My cycles of research would be identified and planned for. The research would neatly fit in with my work commitments and build on the existing relationships I had with my class and colleagues (Hammersley, 1993). Bolstered by the first three taught years of the Ed.D I approached my research with confidence and enjoyed playing the role of researcher and the identity I felt it gave me. This notion of identity would begin to play a central role on my research.

The identity of 'being' a researcher was new to me and at the time I did not see myself as a researcher but as someone who had to *become* a researcher (Coryell et al., 2013). I felt confident in my role as a teacher: the job was familiar and so was my current setting. Research had been conducted into the stability that teachers felt and the affect that this had upon their teaching practice (Day et al., 2006). Due to this reflection I felt I was stable enough in that identity to contemplate bringing in a new and rather challenging dimension to my job. However my identity as a researcher was less stable: I wanted to be a teacher who conducted research but was unsure what this looked like. The only researchers I knew were from my course and I constantly compared myself to them, listening to their confident answers and looking at their research designs. I wanted to learn from them but I did not want to be like them, to replicate their ideas and mould myself into a clone capable of producing a piece of research that would be acceptable. However, as I did not have any other language to use or any developed ideas of my own, I adopted the terms and ideas that I associated with a researcher; I talked of research cycles, data, theories and although I was not fully being an action researcher I was becoming one as my identity was changing, an idea discussed by Biott when researching the affect that action research within one's own work place has on the researcher (Biott, 1996). All of this reading in turn guided how I conceptualised my research as it needed to be done 'properly', to be systematic and clearly planned in order for me to fulfil the

identity I was creating for myself; to have a clear question followed by a definite conclusion; to be who I felt I was expected to be.

At times I felt that 'being' the researcher was more prevalent to the success of completing the research than gathering the data itself. My lack of confidence in my own ability to feel that I could conduct research, that I was allowed to and good enough, affected not only how I presented myself but also what kind of research I chose to do. I chose something that I perceived to be safe, a well-trodden path with a variety of resources I was already familiar with due to my module choices in the taught stage of my course. This introspection felt strangely beneficial but for several weeks I was disheartened and by half term week I retreated into the classroom to doggedly carry on with my research in solitude. I began to understand that my research was a blend of trying to establish what was authentic pupil voice coupled with research in a less mainstream area of education. These two aims, held together by the concept of identity both of my pupils and of my growing identity as a researcher as discussed by Coryell et al (Coryell et al., 2013) and my existing awareness of my identity as a teacher as discussed by Beijaard et al (Beijaard et al., 2000), were part of a broader social constructivist view. This concept of identity was become a central theme of my research (Chapters 3, 9 and 11).

Chapter 3. Literature Review Part One

Jan 12	Feb 12	Mar 12	Apr 12	May 12	Jun 12	July 12	Aug 12	Sep 12	Oct 12	Nov 12	Dec 12	Jan 13	Feb 13	Mar 13	Apr 13	May 13	Jun 13

3.1 Pupil Referral Units

Despite having worked in a PRU for a number of years I realised I had little knowledge of any research that had been conducted on them or in them. I had never seen the need before as they were created during my time in secondary school and had always been a feature of the education system that I was trained within. I wondered how many other staff in PRUs were aware of their formation or if we all just accepted them at face value. I made a note to talk to Brian when I got the chance. So on a quiet Sunday morning I started to investigate the earliest research I could find.

The concept of a Pupil Referral Unit was born out of the recommendations of the Elton Committee report in 1989 which indicated the need for Local Authorities to be responsible for providing good quality alternative provision (Education et al., 1989). The eventual creation of PRUs in the 1990's meant that there was a clear time frame to search for literature in and I adjusted the settings on Google Scholar to search for 'Pupil Referral Unit' between 1994 and 1999. A mere 1800 articles were found. The earliest research appeared to be focused on the rationale for their creation as a means to prevent disruption in schools by means of short term placements and collaborative work (Hill, 1997). There was also a heavy focus on policy (Grundy and Blandford, 1999) and practice (Normington and Boorman, 1996) although there were cases of research conducted in PRUs to ascertain pupil perspectives (Armstrong, 1999) which would become a focus of my research as it progressed.

Primarily the research reflected the newness of PRUs and the dissatisfaction of the previous, often haphazard, system that each local authority had had; there was acknowledgement of the effectiveness of PRUs in supporting pupils who had been permanently excluded from school and discussions around their impact on mainstream education (Hill, 1997; Grundy and Blandford, 1999). On the other hand there were concerns that the new status given to PRUs masked the fact that they

often delivered poor education with some being no better than youth clubs, which meant that the pupil might find it challenging to rejoin a mainstream school again (Thewlis, 1996). The attempt to add clarity to the previous deluge of provision for excluded pupils was a misnomer: the term Pupil Referral Unit was undefined and open to interpretation. I had always disliked the term 'Pupil Referral Unit' as it seemed to indicate separation and isolation from mainstream schools. I was therefore surprised to read the legislation that created it in the 1996 Education Act (DfE, 1996) as right from its conception PRUs were about separation and isolation, a theme which would have great impact upon my research about pupil voice (see Chapter 9 for further discussion).

Although I understood why so much of the early research focused on the function and day to day running of the newly created PRUs, I was taken back by how current the discussions felt; had discussions around PRUs moved on that slowly? I decided to repeat my search with the next dates, 2000-2009. This time Google Scholar threw up 6,870 hits. There was a distinct move towards research on the perspectives of staff and students (Solomon and Rogers, 2001; Capstick, 2005) although there still remained a core of research based upon educational practice, including that which made the PRUs distinct from mainstream schools (Heneker, 2005) and emerging research on pupil outcomes (Pirrie et al., 2011). There remained a critical view of the aims and intentions of PRUs, specifically about the support they offered and the impact on pupils successfully coping in mainstream education (Meo and Parker, 2004). There were concerns that the work that PRUs were undertaking, although well meaning, was actually the responsibility of the mainstream school; it was felt that PRU's attempts to raise self-esteem in a general sense was not as effective as a mainstream school raising self-esteem in specific areas (Solomon and Rogers, 2001). Other research was concerned about the use of exclusion to a PRU as a punitive rather than an restorative measure (Parsons, 2005) and in my experience the schools I worked with did not see us as a strategy for support but rather the end of the line; the ultimate punishment - something I greatly disagreed with.

However there were examples of very successful PRUs that had been able to balance the need for access to a broad and balanced curriculum with activities aimed at reengagement and emotional development. One such was a rural PRU in the South West (Leather, 2009) where alongside more traditional subjects there lay a

huge emphasis on outdoor education which aimed to develop self-esteem and character. Another example was that of an urban PRU where positive relationships were a huge factor for both pupils, staff and parents (Hart, 2012). Both of these PRUs gave access to a broad and balanced curriculum and valued the impact of teaching and learning. However they also valued and recognised the importance of learning that took place outside of the classroom both literally and metaphorically. The additional focuses of these PRUs, on self esteem and relationships, could be described as the development of pupil voice (see relevant section later in this chapter as well as Chapter 9 for further discussion) which is crucial for supporting young people within these settings (Jones, 2013).

I repeated my search with my final dates, 2010-2013. This time 4,180 articles were displayed, over half as many as in the previous time period yet within only four years. Whilst there remained a focus on policy and perceptions there appeared to be a greater turn towards outcomes for pupils (Lawrence, 2011; Pirrie et al., 2011). I thought back to my years at the PRU and what I had noticed during that time. Although I had never read any of the research I had noticed a move towards a greater focus on pupil outcomes. The research also highlighted how different each PRU was and although there was a shared purpose in working with pupils at, or at risk of permanent exclusion, how each setting did this was entirely dependent upon the local authority the PRU was in. For example PRUs need not follow the whole national curriculum and instead can tailor their curriculum to meet the needs of their pupils; the most successful PRUs appeared to be those that offered personalised support beyond the curriculum (Hart, 2013) but this was something that we struggled to do due to our size: many were small with a set age range (Hart, 2012) where as my PRU was cross Key Stage and numbered over 100 pupils on one site. I struggled to find examples of PRUs as large as where I worked. The term 'PRU' seemed to be too large and ambiguous for research indicated that the term 'Pupil Referral Unit' continued to be open to interpretation; experience of one PRU could not be equated with experience of all PRUs. On my return to work after the half term I decided it was time to talk to Brian in his role as my critical friend.

“So it seems that there has been an uneasiness about PRUs from the earliest days, they have never seemed to be fit for purpose and attempts have been made to suggest alternative structures and ways of conceptualising them (Daniels and Cole,

2002) with PRUs being one option for pupils who are struggling with mainstream schools (Cole et al., 2003; Hart, 2012). Whilst I agree with Daniels and Cole that the schooling for young people who attend provisions like a PRU should be future thinking I am concerned that there cannot be a mismatch between specialist and mainstream providers for we are ultimately aiming to return our pupils to that world (Daniels and Cole, 2002)” Brian nodded, “I know that I haven't read any research on PRUs but I agree that there is a lack of understanding about what we do; interesting that there seems to have always been this uncertainty. Why the increase in articles?” I had been pondering this myself, “At first I assumed that it was because the numbers of pupils being excluded had risen but they have actually been in a steady decline (Education, 2013). There has been some academic speculation about the increase linking it to either social issues or changes in educational policy in research conducted in the North East of England that looked at seven urban schools (Vulliamy et al., 2003). The research concluded that the use of specialist support workers minimised the tension between the need to drive up standards and the need to include excluded young people. I believe that people are taking notice of excluded pupils in ways in which they haven't before; they are trying to understand the young people in PRUs.” Brian stretched loudly before standing up and moving towards the door, “Makes you wonder what the research says about excluded pupils doesn't it? A fall in *permanent* exclusions does not cover all exclusions does it?”

3.2 Inclusion and exclusion

For a number of years the notion of having separate types of educational provision had been compared to the desire to have a more inclusive system (Barton, 1997). The two ideals were not compatible and I had personally struggled with the often mixed messages that working in a PRU gave me: on one hand my role included reintegrating young people back into mainstream education; to support schools in being inclusive of all learners in their local community. On the other I was met with schools seeking to exclude pupils who did not quite fit in or who were from a known challenging family. At times it felt that the word ‘inclusion’ was merely a veneer for exclusive practice for how genuinely inclusive is a managed move, that is on one hand highly encouraged by a local authority who wants to reduce their permanent exclusion rate to zero, and on the other a school which sees an opportunity to negotiate ways of moving on their own challenging pupils if they accommodate one

on a managed move from another school (Pirrie et al., 2011). Pupils perceived to be challenging are at risk of being passed around from school to school with all of the emotional and social instability that this can bring.

Inclusive practice came to the forefront of the then Labour Government's agenda with the formation of the Every Child Matters (ECM) initiative in 2003 as part of the response to the death of Victoria Climbié (Government, 2003). This push towards inclusive practice and the use of permanent exclusions in extreme cases only led some to question the possible growth in other exclusive practices that would allow schools to fulfil the ECM principles yet also manage the young people in their setting through a range of on site and off site interventions (Gray and Panter, 2000). Later research conducted with mainstream teachers educating pupils with challenging behaviour found that these fears had not been unfounded as some reported that these young people were being educated in separate units away from the mainstream of the school (Goodman and Burton, 2010). The main focus of the inclusion agenda appeared to be on Special Educational Needs of which those with emotional needs were only a small part (Ellis et al., 2008). This focus on pupils with learning needs as their primary concern was largely due to the affect the inclusion agenda had upon the closure of Special Needs schools and the challenges that some young people had upon accessing mainstream education⁵. The whole notion of inclusion was questioned, including the readiness for such a philosophical idea in relation to an existing system that was unable to support it (Evans and Lunt, 2002); I found myself agreeing heavily with this stance as the rush to be 'inclusive' was motivated by people's perspectives of what pupils needed and not on the perspectives of the pupils themselves and, at times, their responses to an inclusive education was not a positive one. This lack of pupil perspective was at the heart of my research, as was the notion of identity, both in relation to the pupils who were excluded and those who worked with them. I also had a growing sense of awareness that the only way to elicit these views was in ways that were non threatening to the pupils and easy for them to use.

I decided I wanted to share my findings with Brian. I opened our conversation by explaining what I had had discovered in answer to the question he had previously

⁵<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/specialneeds-education-does-mainstream-inclusion-work-470960.html>

posed, “So it sums up pretty much what I feel: inclusion is a huge area and the needs of our pupils are only a fragment.” Brian put his pen down and looked at me, “Has any of the research included the views of the kids on this?”. I nodded, “The voices of excluded pupils are often not heard and they are frequently the weaker partners in any action taken against them; research into their experiences has attempted to make them more visible (Munn and Lloyd, 2005; Kaplan et al., 2011). This is the issue that really gets me as the pupils are the most important partners in my eyes.” I was aware that I had missed an important area: pupil voice was a crucial element that I needed to understand as I was concerned about pupil perspectives and opinions. “Brian, can you sum up what you know about pupil voice?”. Brian spoke, “Pupil voice. Right: school councils, pupil questionnaires, listening....beyond that not a lot!” I laughed, “I agree. That is the sum of all I really know too. I am sure I will fill you in at some point. Coffee?”

3.3 Pupil voice

The concept of pupil voice partly arose from the United Nations Rights of the Child Article 12⁶ although there has been criticism that the way that it has been interpreted has been too limited and has not given young people any genuine power (Lundy, 2007). This notion of power is prevalent in much of the literature surrounding pupil voice both in terms of how and why voice is privileged by adults as well as concerns about conceptualising voice.

Regarding how pupil voice is collected, concerns have been raised that academic work has been too distant and disconnected from the children who are participants (Harriot Beazley, 2009) and that this disconnection can lead to an abuse of power as researchers could be criticised for hearing pupils’ voice but not listening to it. Added to this is the issue of pupil’s understanding of the reason for the research they are involved in (Punch, 2002a) which leads to a tension between recognising pupils as active participants yet the need to be mindful that their journey towards full participation is incomplete (Balen, 2006). Ultimately, the request to hear pupil voice is usually a request made by adults of children and is therefore motivated by an adult led agenda (Hill, 2006); the balance of power is therefore firmly with adults.

⁶<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

Yet there is also the issue of why voice is collected and what purpose it serves. The lack of clarity regarding the use of voice means that it is open to being used by policy makers as a way of evaluating professionalism (Whitty and Wisby, 2007). Here, pupil voice is not about giving expression to the marginalised but is about using that voice to serve another purpose and that the power relationship between pupil and adult recording their voice will effect both what the pupil says and how what they say is used (Taylor and Robinson, 2009).

Conceptualising voice has also been problematic due to the fact that there is not one agreed understanding of voice which means that pupils sharing their voice across different contexts, from the classroom to the hospital ward, may not necessarily understand the variations across each setting (Maybin, 2013) which leaves them open to exploitation. Instead, pupil voice can be viewed as a continuum with a variety of understandings (Whitty and Wisby, 2007) which can include complex and hidden agendas (Arnot and Reay, 2007).

When relating these to the specific context of a school, concerns have been raised about hearing pupil perspective and opinions on curriculum development (Stenhouse, 1975) and the concept of pupil voice/student voice has gradually developed (Cook-Sather, 2006). The specific need for effective pupil and teacher relationships beyond collaboration has been discussed for many years: Fielding discussed 'radical collegiality' where pupils and staff attended inclusive dialogic environments so that the differing voices of pupils could be heard (Fielding, 1999), similarly Arnot and Reay's focus was on school power relations and the affect of a dominant relationship on voice (Arnot and Reay, 2007), where as Weil focused on children's voices within health practices and the role of the school in developing the practice with children (Weil, 2012). Research on pupil voice has taken several different forms. Some research has focused on the links between pupil voice and identity; the value of pupil voice was the development of self-concept (MacBeath, 2006), yet for others pupil voice has not explored this enough and missed out on creating shared social meanings (Cruddas, 2007). Other research has responded to questions about the balance of power in pupil/teacher relationships (Arnot and Reay, 2007; Uitto and Syrjälä, 2008) which stands out to me due to my existing interest in how such relationships are created within a classroom.

Concerns are also raised about how pupil voice is viewed by schools. Firstly, whether it is merely a tokenistic nod towards good practice (Cremin et al., 2011) and a tick on the Ofsted list. Secondly, are teachers equipped to successfully support pupil voice and to deal with the changes that it might bring to the existing status quo (Bragg, 2007).

An increasing body of more recent research has looked at how pupil voice can be sought beyond purely verbal communication (Schiller and Einarsdottir, 2009; Tay-Lim and Lim, 2013). This broadening of the notion of 'voice' allows for a multi-method approach to understanding pupil's perspectives (Moss and Clark, 2011). I feel that this broader understanding of voice is crucial especially in stopping pupil voice from becoming empty rhetoric, for surely pupil voice is an abstract concept without a culture of shared spaces where there is an ongoing equal relationship in practice (Fielding, 2004). These experiences allow the voice of pupils to be heard on a multitude of different levels (for further discussion on pupil voice please see Chapter 9).

It was highly important that my research is not tokenistic and I am aware that it runs the risk of being so, even without meaning to be, unless it genuinely captures the pupils' thoughts and feelings. In order to achieve this I have to ensure that I am getting the power balance right, for I want them to share what they want to without feeling that they have to share because I am their teacher. Nor do I want to coerce them because I want their data and have to respect their boundaries. This has implications for my ethical practice and I am highly aware that, as an insider conducting research in the classroom with existing relationships, there can be issues with what Floyd and Arthur term 'internal ethical engagement' (Floyd and Arthur, 2012). Although I know that my research will add to, and strengthen, the argument for highly ethical ethnographic research as discussed by De Costa (De Costa, 2014), I am uncertain how it would look in practice.

3.4 Identity

The area of identity and research into the concept is vast with most social science disciplines having a wealth of research and discussion upon it. Therefore it has been

necessary to focus on theories which seemed most applicable to classroom practice and the complexity of classroom relationships. Identity can be viewed as a social construction created and formed; Lamont and Molnar explore this through our interaction with social and symbolic boundaries (Lamont and Molnár, 2002) or as part of our understanding of our culture or ethnicity as discussed by Howard (Howard, 2000). In order to understand how people perceive their own identities it is necessary to take an interpretivist view of understanding the situation that each person is within. We can try and understand identity in a variety of ways, such as through language, actions and thought. However a relativist stance accepts it will largely remain unknowable due to its dependence on context.

The term 'identity' within social sciences has a dual meaning of both the more traditional 'social identity' and the more modern 'personal identity' (Fearon, 1999). One can have many social identities: within this research I am both 'teacher' and 'researcher' and my class are both 'primary pupils' and 'permanently excluded'. Assumptions are often made about these outer identities and we make judgments about who people are: if someone is a nurse we assume they are caring and helpful; if someone is a soldier they are strong and brave. A group of people, teachers for example, display similar group norms (Hogg and Reid, 2006). Is this group truly cohesive or homogeneous?

Our personal identity can have a large impact upon our social identity yet there is often perceived to be a difference between the outer world presentation and our inner lives (Hogg et al., 1995). I do not believe that this separation is necessarily the case. Instead I would argue for the case made by Stets and Burke in attempting to create a more general theory which encompasses both (Burke, 2000), which Cerulo succinctly terms a 'collective identity' (Cerulo, 1997). The reason for such a combining of theories is that they are inextricably linked: my personal identity and values affect the social decisions I make; my social presentation and the groups I am affiliated with affect my own view of myself. For example I perceive myself to be kind, caring and nurturing and I choose a profession which allows me to be honest to my identity and I become a teacher. Yet the profession of being a 'teacher' attracts people who enjoy working with young people and want to make a difference in their lives⁷. This group identity reinforces my personal identity and boosts my belief that I am a nurturing and

⁷<http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/jan/27/five-top-reasons-teachers-join-and-quit>

caring individual. My personal and professional identities are interrelated (Day et al., 2006).

I was aware that identity did not only affect me but also the pupils in my class. They would have their own collective identity that would affect their day to day decision making and presentation. However, due to their ages, they would probably also have an identity largely shaped by their family relationships. It would therefore be important to reflect upon what they were showing me of themselves and the reasons why this would be; their public and private selves

Chapter 4. Data Collection Part One

Jan 12	Feb 12	Mar 12	Apr 12	May 12	Jun 12	July 12	Aug 12	Sep 12	Oct 12	Nov 12	Dec 12	Jan 13	Feb 13	Mar 13	Apr 13	May 13	Jun 13

4.1 Data - what is it?

I was aware that my teaching group was always going to remain small at around 6-8 at any time. I was also conscious that my data was going to be drawn from timetabled lessons which gave me only three forty-five minute sessions per week. This meant that I was not going to collect many pieces of work within the two terms I had planned for. Added to this my desire to let the pupils be actively involved meant that they would be able to withhold anything that they did not want included; I wanted them to be active participants with a good understanding of their role in my research (Punch, 2002b). I was mindful of the tension raised by Beazley (Harriot Beazley, 2009) in their participation with my research as discussed in Chapter 3. I was working on the loose principle of aiming for 10 pieces of work from each pupil over a two term basis.

The lessons I was planning on using were predominantly PSHCE based and followed an existing format of a circle time activity, discussion/play session and paper based response to the lesson. The third lesson was a dedicated tutor time on a Monday morning where pupils discussed their targets for the week and joined in with a circle time discussing their weekend.

As a lot of the information from the excluding school was sensitive I wanted to create anonymised stories to provide the background to each selected case. However there was more to them than simply changing the names of people and places. I saw them as being 'fictionalised narratives' or what is commonly referred to as 'ethnographic fiction'. Ethnographic fiction can be compared to historical novels for both are about events that it is agreed did happen yet they are presented in a way imagined by the author (Hecht, 2007). However they are also useful when dealing with highly sensitive or ethical data as Sparkes discusses when writing about homosexuality (Sparkes, 1997). These ethnographic fiction narratives would allow me to paint a picture of each case, making the pupils real, so that anyone reading my research was able to have a clear image in their minds of who they were; I wanted to provide

as much of a personal relationship for the reader as possible so that they could share some of my emotional involvement. I was hoping for three pupils to use as case studies to give a range of excluding schools and reasons for exclusion.

I tried to imagine what data collection would be like. I swung between imagining it would be straight forward, as I had planned and prepared for it, to expecting it to be an unmitigated disaster with the pupils all dropping out and my data remaining merely an idea. There was one practical issue that I was certain of as I knew that I would have time constraints as I was a full time teacher. Yet my full time commitment was only part of the challenge of being a teacher as there was a thin undefined line of how far my research could impinge upon my classroom practice. From my view point I did not want data collection to be any different to normal lessons so that the pupils did not feel that anything was different. This was especially important for those pupils who were not part of the research as they needed to be accessing a regular curriculum. Therefore the way that data was collected needed to appear similar to teaching methods already used. I was highly aware that I needed the pupils to be aware that completing a piece of written work was compulsory as it was part of the lesson but handing it over for my research was voluntary, as was working 1:1 with me (they controlled the flow of data). There was also to be no 'reward' for taking part (Skinner, 1938).

I was keen for the data collection to coincide with lessons that leant themselves to my research because of their focus on feelings and emotions; I wanted to know what they thought about exclusion and coming to the PRU. This meant that I was limited to weekly PSHCE lessons, tutor time or spontaneous opportunities that arose. My main concern was that the research did not dominate classroom activities or distract from meeting the pupils' academic, emotional or social needs. Staff knew of my research and I had sought permission from the Senior Leadership Team through a formal discussion and sharing of my proposal with the Head Teacher and her line manager who had strategic responsibility for SEN and Inclusion within my local authority, yet we never formally discussed how my research would affect my teaching. Instead I was left to set my own ethical boundaries and to make my own judgements. I was trying to strike a balance between making the research as naturalistic as possible so that it did not stand out from my day to day teaching practice, yet making sure that all parties (pupils, parents, staff and local authority)

were aware of what was happening (Smith, 1981). Added to this the need for a continual dialogue with all parties meant that the research was going to have to be low key (part of my day to day teaching) and high status (as I was open to sharing my research with the headteacher if she wanted to see what I was doing) simultaneously. As discussed in Chapter 3, Whitty and Wisby highlighted concerns about the potential for research with children to be misused (Whitty and Wisby, 2007). It was crucial that my data collection was fully understood by the school leadership as coming from my professional practice but also being separate from it so that it was not used as a means of evaluating my teaching or used for any other purpose other than my thesis.

However I was not only approaching data collection as just a teacher for I had many work identities as well as those associated with my outside life (Giampapa, 2010). I was a parent and elements of maternal love and care affected my approach as I fiercely wanted to protect the case study pupils and do their stories justice by valuing them (Casey, 1990). I was highly aware that I could not scaffold or support them to change their answers but my PSHCE lessons had always been more relaxed and informal when it came to how the pupils recorded their work. I was also a real person with my own thoughts and feelings and was aware that this would affect the data collection. I am organised in a very disorganised way, my desk may be a chaotic tip of sticky notes, old coffee cups and numerous pens but I know where everything is. I am a woman who gets frustrated by the impact of menstruation on how I feel at work, what I wear and my emotional responses (Thanem and Knights, 2012). I am also someone who starts a project off with boundless enthusiasm yet can struggle to maintain the impetus for the journey, often tailing off into nothingness. I needed to be self aware and reflective especially in light of the resilience needed within the classroom setting (Yost, 2006). I found Bengtsson's three part view of reflection useful in understanding the complexity of the subject: reflection as self-reflection, reflection as thinking and reflection as self understanding (Bengtsson, 1995). However I was also aware that I needed to record this reflective journey for a variety of reasons including self reflection and to do the pupils' justice in accurately reflecting back what they shared so that their socially constructed world view could be explored.

I decided to use a journal alongside my data collection to assist in reflecting (Moon, 1999). It would also enable me to record events within my classroom and note anything of interest that happened with my pupils. Yet this journal also felt important as I did not just want to focus on the pupil's behaviour, what they might do, which could be controlled and influenced through my actions (Skinner et al., 1972) but to be able to try and get a sense of who my pupils were and how they thought; a deeper understanding of them as real people. It was here that I found my starting point as I prepared myself for the task ahead by trying to understand what I thought about my pupils as it seemed important to document my starting point. Due to the often rapid turn over of pupils, I realised that I often thought of my current group with reference to those I had taught before. This strategy made it easier to place a pupil before I had built a relationship with them. I noted that I had categorised them by clear types: emotional needs, social needs, special needs and home life. Within each of those groups I had a previous pupil in mind that I held as an archetype. This surprised me:

'I always assumed I reacted as an individual to an individual case. That the uniqueness of each was paramount to how I dealt with them' (9.10.12)

However I became aware through my reading that teachers often used this strategy and that research had been conducted into how successful it was (Hoge and Cudmore, 1986; Copenhaver and Mc Intyre, 1992).

The data collection started well as I had gained ethical clearance from both the local authority and from my headteacher and I felt I was in a position to discuss the research with parents/carers and pupils. Letters were sent home so that it could be discussed and the pupils approached if permission was granted by the parents⁸. I decided to talk to each pupil on a 1:1 basis and share what my research was about. They also had an opportunity to ask questions or make comments and that included being able to say 'no' and leave the room as I was uncomfortable with methods that sought to gain permission through rewards or opting out rather than in to research (Hunter, 2003). I approached eight pupils. Included in these are three pupils that I wanted to use as case studies. The parents/carers/social workers of these case studies had each given their permission, as well as the pupils. There remained four

⁸<http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/research-with-children-105>

who had also granted personal and parental permission and I intend these to be subsidiary cases which I could use for additional material. Yet I soon found myself in an ethically challenging situation when permission was given by the pupil and not the parents after the research had been openly discussed by the family. The pupil in question was Tony, an 8 year old boy. Tony expressed opinions that were diametrically opposed to the ones his mother expressed. When Tony spoke to me about the research he appeared to be very thoughtful. He told me his parents had discussed the research at home but he was keen to only ask one question: will it help other children? Tony was a difficult pupil to work with for he was verbally abusive to staff in an exceptionally personal way and had been brought up in an environment that had little, if any, boundaries.

Talking about his dogs was when his softer side came out. His normal demeanour was argumentative and challenging which was why his question shocked me. I knew I had to answer honestly, "I hope so. I hope that it will make a small difference to someone but I can't promise it will. It might just become a dusty book in a library but I hope it helps. I must tell you that it won't change anything for you; it won't change your exclusion or help with you going to a new school." Tony cocked his head to one side and looked at me, "I know that. I just wanna know if it will help other kids. I wanna help." He left the classroom to return to his lesson next door leaving me sat astounded having learnt a valuable lesson about making assumptions. I hoped that Tony got something positive out of the process as I was aware of the therapeutic benefits that it could bring (Berger and Malkinson, 2000; Haynes, 2006b).

His response was not matched by his mother's. For her any research, no matter how naturalistic and part of an existing social and emotional curriculum, was unacceptable. In her reply slip the research was conceptualised in almost medical terms as if he were to be experimented on like a laboratory rat. Expressions like, 'No way' and 'I will not have his head messed with' appeared throughout the reply attached to the permission slip. I read it and felt tears in the corners of my eyes; it felt like a personal criticism. I tried to forget it and rationalise my thoughts: she had many reasons to distrust educational professionals and was known to be very protective of her children. From her past experiences it was not surprising that she felt such anger towards my suggestion. I was aware that parents in similar situations to her often felt disenfranchised from the education system (Hanafin and Lynch,

2002). Yet I kept on returning to feelings of hurt and sadness when I thought of Tony's mother. I was also frustrated that maybe I hadn't expressed my intentions clearly enough or built a strong enough relationship with her.

It left me with a dilemma: whose request should I follow and why? The guiding principle was to obtain consent from the gatekeepers, his parents in this case, prior to asking the pupil. However there was some accepted practice whereby a pupil aged under 16 and able to understand what the research comprised of and competent to make a decision could give their own consent without parental permission⁹, however they would need to be suitably counselled. . He had expressed a desire to have his voice heard and that his mother's wishes being taken as the final say curtailed his rights (Coyne, 2009). My heart was telling me to include Tony in the research for a number of reasons:

1. He wanted to join in
2. He offered a unique perspective and voice that I wanted to hear
3. Although only in Yr 4, he was mature, streetwise and frequently articulate about his own thoughts and feelings; he appeared to know himself well

However I had reservations:

- a. Tony was a vulnerable pupil; he was permanently excluded, was on free school meals and categorised as having Special Educational Needs needs due to his social and emotional difficulties
- b. Tony's mother was strongly against involvement; my duty as a teacher in building relationships with parents¹⁰ took precedence over my role as researcher

In the end I decided to not include Tony in the research although it left me feeling uncomfortable. The irony of wanting to hear an authentic pupil voice, especially from pupils who were disadvantaged and outside of the mainstream education system, yet choosing not to was not lost on me. I consoled myself with the thought that at least I had *wanted* to hear his voice even if it was not possible to share it with others.

⁹<https://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/forms/guidance1.pdf>

¹⁰https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/301107/Teachers_Standards.pdf

4.2 On with the research

I used my research journal to record my thoughts and feelings and to note down key ideas or connections. My epistemological beliefs meant that this focus on trying to understand my own perspective on my classroom alongside that of my pupils seemed natural and the use of the journal provided me with rich data that I knew I was not able to get by any other means (Moon, 1999). However the main focus of the research was to be paper based worksheets and kinaesthetic activities. My idea was to collect the PVTs (Wall, 2008a) and worksheets during PSHCE lessons. Such lessons followed a loose plan and were adapted to suit the needs of the individuals in the class. The visual simplicity of the PVTs were appealing but, as discussed earlier (Chapter 2) I was concerned that they would not be accessible to all; although I had been taught that pupils of the age that I was teaching could have been described as being at a concrete operational stage, I knew that their learning needs placed them at the lower intuitive thought substage (Piaget, 1971) so I chose to act upon my own understanding rather than relying upon a broader theory (Huitt and Hummel, 2003).

The PSHCE curriculum contained common themes based around exclusion from school and reintegration into a new one and lessons were aimed at raising pupil's self-esteem and developing their emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2001). The format followed the same pattern: a circle time game, a discussion about feelings in different situations, and a table based activity. At the end of every session I asked the pupils who were part of the project to place their worksheet in a tray at the back of the class if they were willing for it to be part of the research. I was mindful that being treated as being an equal partner in the research may well be a challenging concept to pupils more used to being dominated by an adult (Punch, 2002c) and therefore the tray was not emptied immediately, but would remain there for several days which allowed pupils to remove work if they changed their minds. At times pupils who were not part of the project placed their work in the tray either because they had watched others doing it or because they had wanted their work included. No pupil was ever stopped from placing their work in the tray but I discounted the work from pupils who did not have parental permission or who had initially declined to take part in the research as I was unable to know if they were participating out of genuine desire or because they felt obliged to.

Collecting data in this way had several drawbacks. Firstly it meant that I rarely collected the same pieces of work from all of the pupils involved. Secondly I would have to discount examples from pupils who did not have parental consent that were interesting and potentially giving a valuable viewpoint. Thirdly the pupils involved in the research would often remove pieces that were again highly interesting or emotive; in the end I stopped looking at the work in the tray until I collected it in so that I was not influenced by anything I saw. Despite these concerns I largely felt at peace with the research because of the freedom the pupils had as they did not have to complete or comply with any of the tasks set: their 'work' was simply part of our PSHCE lesson and not threatening or overwhelming (Denscombe and Aubrook, 1992). This ethical decision meant that they were able to see that I respected their choices which in turn allowed the development of a mutually trusting relationship; they knew that they would never be pestered to hand work over nor would they have work included if they did not agree to it.

Alongside collecting paper based data from lessons I also invited pupils to take part in a short play session using Fisher Price figures. Pupils were asked two questions prior to the play session starting: 'what was it like at school?' and 'what is it like here at the PRU?'. These questions were not fixed and would be explained or rephrased depending upon the needs of the individual pupil. Pupils were allowed to choose from a selection of figures with the hope that they would make meaning from their play (Vygotsky, 1980; Whittington and Floyd, 2009). If the pupils decided to use the figures for a different purpose then this was allowed and they were not asked to refocus. They could choose to take a photo of their play for the tray and these sessions were accompanied by notes in my research journal. My intention was to compare the pupil's written accounts of themselves with their presentation through play and dialogue, which would mean I could triangulate their responses to see if there were any common themes. I was hoping that I would be able to present a synoptic look at the pupil accounts compared to the information gathered from the school exclusion data. I had been adamant that I did not want to impose my own understandings on what the pupils offered and needed to step back from the process and present what was given (Laws and Fisher, 1999); I was also conscious of extending this to the data gathered from school and saw the need to step back from that as well. Both the pupil data and school data needed to be structured as little as possible by my own prior assumptions in order for it to be explored for what it was.

From my own practice I was aware that pupils had preferences for different forms of activity which was why the paper based tasks included both writing and drawing aspects. This play activity gave a kinaesthetic and verbal element to the research data. One example of how play led to discussion came from Marcus who set the figures out like this:



Figure 1 - Photo taken by Marcus on the 8.9.12

Whilst he was playing we talked about his excluding school and how he had ended up at the PRU. He said, "I didn't have many friends, just Liam ." (8.9.12). He then placed the figures on the desk and he asked if I could take a photograph. He did not elaborate any further on the scene that he had created which led me to question what he was trying to express for there could be multiple answers: are the standing figures Marcus and Liam? Are the figures lying down the classmates that shun Marcus? Or was it something more abstract such as people sitting in a cinema waiting for the film to start? I wanted to understand what he had communicated. For all the pupils involved, the play tended to fall into two distinct categories either developing to include acting out of entire scenes or else remaining as a single moment captured in a silent tableaux. In both cases I decided that I would allow the pupils to dictate how much they chose to share and not make assumptions about what I was seeing based upon my own experiences of being a child something which Punch felt adults repeatedly felt they could do (Punch, 2002c).

During the early stage of research I began to notice that I thought of pupils by types rather than as individuals. In the September I initially had four groups: emotionally immature, social, school breakdown and disturbed. Often the pupils could fit into more than one group and so I used Venn diagrams to link groups together:

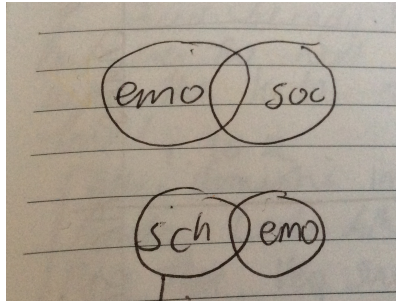


Figure 2 - Journal entry dated 14.9.12

By early October I had developed this further and had clarified the groupings so that they finally stood at: SEN, emotional, family, medical, mental health and was a Looked After Child (LAC) . I used information from their exclusion case files and conversations with other professionals to aid my development of these groups for example a lower attaining pupil at exclusion would be grouped as SEN whilst the fact that he was undergoing a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) assessment added him to the mental health group as well. In addition to this I had begun to question the benefits and drawbacks of such an approach and I had reflected upon the affect that it had upon my relationships with my class. Prior to the research I had always assumed that I treated each individual as an individual case; that the uniqueness of each pupil was paramount to how I dealt with them. However, on reflection, this proved to be not the case. The benefits of working with 'types' of pupils meant that I could draw upon past experiences from other relationships which enable me to quickly find methods to work with them; if Liam presented rather like x from a few years ago then maybe the methods and activities that had worked then will work again now. There were drawbacks with the most dominant one being that it was too easy to make assumptions about pupils in order to fit them into a pre-established mould. This meant that I often missed vital personality traits or ripples from past events that ultimately were to play a role in my ability to form and build successful relationships with them. However I appreciated that I still had a stronger relationship with them than a researcher from outside of our setting and this began to develop as a dominant theme in the later months of my research (Chapter 6). Yet this had potential draw backs as it would make it harder to ensure that I had not structured data collection based upon my prior knowledge and experience of the pupils. On reflection I can appreciate that I was aspiring for objectivity; a naive empiricism that I believed I would be able to achieve although my views on this changed over the course of the research.

In spite of these drawbacks, grouping the pupils in such a way felt like a very natural thing to do given the circumstances that I worked within, especially the pressure of time in building relationships. However I decided to talk about it with Brian as I wanted to know if it was something unique to my style or if it was a trait shared with other teachers, "When you think about Stevie, do you just think about him or do you think about other pupils like him?". Brian frowned, "I'm not sure. I suppose I think about him really but then he reminds me of others too." I tried to probe him further, "Like who? Who does Stevie remind you of?" He sat thinking a while before answering, "I suppose he reminds me of Bobby. I guess I hadn't thought of that before."

I tried to gather my thoughts before explaining further, "You see I do it all the time and I find that it helps in the first few weeks until I know them better. It gives me a way in. Take Liam as an example. He reminded me of John (diary entry dated 11.12.12). You remember John? Blonde, worldly, used to go lamping (hunting with lights)¹¹ and offered to bring me in a rabbit or two?" Brian laughed, "Oh yes! Worldly but with learning needs. I remember." I jumped straight in, "So you see how he is like Liam? So I used my knowledge of John to help me form a relationship with Liam. I call it 'Family Trees'. I find it takes the pressure off trying to build a picture from the school information alone, as that can be so one sided, or from trying to force a relationship where there is not yet grounds for one." Brian took a sip of his tea before continuing, "So what does knowing this about yourself add to your research?" The question felt like quite a challenge and I knew I needed to answer it well, "Ok, good question. It means that I have to be aware of reading too much into what answers they give me out of a sense that I 'know' who they are. Whilst the tool is helpful for building relationships it is unhelpful for conducting research as a practitioner. It has made me conscious of how much I analyse what the pupils say and that there is a danger of reading too much of myself into the data." Brian looked at me, "I agree, you need to constantly be aware of your own personal feelings and to accept the criticism if someone tells you that you are getting too close." As I drove home that night I realised that Brian was right and I was thankful for a friend who was willing to act as

¹¹ <https://www.wordnik.com/words/lamping>

my enemy (Torbert, 1976) and the impact upon my own thinking from the challenge a critical friend brought (Franzak, 2002).

Although I was aware that this was a technique I used, I was unsure how to progress with it or what it meant for my research. It felt important to be that reflective about my practice however it would only be later on in my research that it became an important turning point.

4.3 Data from pupil paperwork

As well as the data generated from my research in the classroom, I was also keen to explore the data that arrived with each pupil although I was mindful that this was a voice privileged by adults. At exclusion the local authority asked the excluding schools for three pieces of paperwork. The largest was called the EX1 and it was the schools formal reason for the exclusion. It asked schools to explain why the exclusion had occurred, the services working with the young person and what strategies had been used to support them (Appendix 1). Some schools wrote at length diligently filling out each section, however there was no compulsion on schools to fill the form out in any detail and many did not. The second document was an academic profile (Appendix 2) and the third a pupil profile (Appendix 3). There appeared to be no quality assurance of these documents and, if the local authority was unable to offer an alternative proposal to the headteacher, then the exclusion was upheld. None of the paperwork included the young person's opinion or if they were aware of the decision. Neither did it contain parental views and opinion. Often the headteacher would ask other staff for supplementary evidence but often it was compiled by him/her alone.

Liam's paperwork was comprehensively filled out. The EX1 contained a behaviour log of 85 incidents recorded over a four year period. It included references to the support that had been put in place including:

- literacy support
- counselling
- reward chart

- support from the local authority behaviour team including a short term placement at the PRU
- CAMHS referral

His risk assessment recorded him as being level 6 - a high risk. Academically he was recorded as working below expectations across all subject areas. His pupil profile indicated that he was School Action Plus and in spite of his recorded learning needs, no referral had been made to educational psychology or learning support. Liam's information contained no record of his parents' views or his own. No additional paperwork was included, for example an Individual Education Plan. His permanent exclusion was for having exceeded the number of days allocated for fixed term exclusions as set out in the most recent Government information (Education, 2012). The use of exclusion as a disciplinary measure and the power of the headteacher will be discussed in chapter 9.

Marcus was excluded from the same school and his paperwork was completed to the same standard as Liam's. The EX1 included a list of 60 incidents in a three year period. He had received similar support to Liam:

- literacy support
- counselling
- reward chart
- discussion about a managed move

His risk was level 5 a high risk but he had significantly more incidents of immature behaviour, such as singing in lessons, than violence and aggression for out of the 60 recorded incidents, 47 were low level. Academically he was working below age and stage expectations and was recorded as being School Action. No referrals were made to educational psychology or CAMHS and his exclusion was cited as due to persistent challenging behaviour. No other information was included.

Cain had attended a school in a different area. Instead of logging a series of behaviour issues his school only referred to the range of strategies that had been used to support him. He had received:

- CAMHS referral
- Educational psychology referral

- counselling
- reduced timetable
- 1:1 support

The section asking the headteacher to record their reason for exclusion mentioned an act of assault against a peer as the reason for the permanent exclusion which was an act of gross misconduct. Cain's risk assessment was level 6, he was working at age expectation and was not recorded as having any learning needs although he had emotional and social concerns. Cain's family were part of the Team Around the Family¹² process and the minutes from these meetings was also included. Whilst these documents contained a great deal of data I realised that there were ethical implications in how I could use and discuss it. This was to continue to have implications for my research as my thesis developed (Chapter 6).

4.4 Staff/pupil relationships

The conversation with Brian, which had initially boosted me, began to trouble me and led me to doubt the validity of my research and the degree that I was placing my reflection of the pupils' lives and my stories of them above the data I was collecting from each individual and I was conscious that I did not want their pupil voice to be lost. I knew I had to balance my desire to answer my research questions with my ethical position regarding interpretation, I believed that my in depth knowledge of my pupils was crucial for my data collection yet I was unsure how to use it. I knew my insider knowledge would provide unique data, gathered through being part of a shared community, about the way that things really were within my classroom which was a benefit of being an 'insider' rather than an 'outsider' (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007).

I had begun to see the importance of my role in the research yet did not want my interpretation to be at the expense of the pupil's stories, a warning clearly expressed by Hammersly and Atkinson and their concerns about autoethnographic writers placing themselves in the foreground (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). This was to

¹² Team Around the Family (TAF) is how professionals offer a multi-agency support to the young person and other family members.

be a topic I would return to throughout my research and one where my opinion gradually began to shift (for further discussion see Chapters 6 and 8). Over a few days I reflected upon my relationships with my pupils as a means of confirming to myself that I had moved away from grouping them in Family Trees, and had moved onto understanding them as people in their own rights with their stories in the foreground. Liam and Marcus were constantly the most dominant characters in my mind and were polar opposites both in their actions and in their affect on my own emotions. Liam was a challenging 8 year old boy who, despite his past, drew out feelings of intense anger and frustration from within me. His behaviour was challenging and I struggled to find ways to find out his perspectives on exclusion using the methods I had chosen (discussion later in chapter). His data was often completed in an erratic manner or he destroyed it in a state of complete anger. I was aware that part of his negativity was due to the fact that he was benefiting from his time at the PRU:

'I think this is why he can kick off because he knows he can and be forgiven and welcomed back with open arms.' (Journal entry 11.10.12)

Marcus was a different character altogether. He was willing to complete any piece of work that he was asked to do and was very keen to discuss his thoughts and feelings about his exclusion and life at the PRU. However this openness felt like a veneer as he rarely said anything specific about himself, instead offering general statements such as 'I felt sad' or 'I felt happy'. I sensed that there was more to Marcus than he was willing to share and he troubled me greatly:

'I feel that Marcus needs more than I can offer. I feel he is so damaged that I fear it is not possible to turn it around. I don't think Marcus trusts me. We have known each other since May but he has opened up to me no more now than then. I genuinely fear that I will make no impact on Marcus.' (Journal entry 11.10.12)

I was aware that I was still getting to know my pupils and that it would take time to understand who they were and how they worked. I began to appreciate that, from a relativist stance, my pupils had knowable unique identities that I could understand from my perspective of them, yet this opinion was subjective due to the relationship

that I had with them, what Hammersley terms 'subtle realism' (Hammersley, 1992). The implications for my research and data collection was that the pupil stories I was presenting would be co-constructed and framed within my own story and interpretation of events. The context which my research took place within would give meaning to what data I collected and this, along with reflective dialogue, would give that meaning form and shape (Taylor, 1978). I was also aware of the need to see pupil voice as a continuum and not a one off event as discussed in Chapter 3. Finally, the growing awareness of the importance of my relationship with the pupils and the impact of this upon was to eventually lead to a change of focus in my research questions (Chapter 6).

I felt that I was settled into my data collection and did not envisage that anything would change.

4.5 The role and function of a PRU

The setting I was in was dramatically shaping my data collection. I was aware from my reading that it was not possible to design a perfect piece of research (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). I realised that research focusing on practitioner research had been conducted successfully within a mainstream setting (Bartlett and Burton, 2006), (Simons et al., 2003). I was not in a mainstream setting and my class would always be different for two reasons: firstly the dynamics of my classroom were constantly shifting when pupils arrived and left which impacted upon the data collection as there were times when it was not possible due to the instability it caused. During these moments all adult support was needed to create a positive classroom environment and this meant that the focus shifted from following the timetable to developing social and emotional skills through additional play sessions or access to additional Forest School lessons¹³. Secondly I had no idea when any of my three main pupils might leave which added a degree of pressure. Although I had previously outlined the basic function of my PRU, this awareness of the impact upon my research led me to want to understand them in greater detail. I shared my learning with Erica and Dawn:

¹³ Forest School offers pupils the chance to learn outside of the classroom and develop social and emotional skills.

Hello you two,

As you know, I work in a PRU. Recently I have become aware just how different working in a PRU is to being in a permanent educational provider. To try and understand the impact on the data I am collecting I have felt it necessary to research the role and function of a PRU in greater detail.

The path for the creation of PRUs was laid down in the 1980s with the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 (s.23-27) which allowed for the permanent exclusion of pupils. The act of permanent exclusion transfers the pupil from the school roll to the care of the local authority. From this moment the school is absolved of any responsibility and any support they have been giving the pupil stops. This has both positive and negative consequences. On the negative side, the pupil loses access to interventions (academic, social or emotional) and support provided by the school including access to their Educational Psychologist. Anything the pupil now requires is met by the local authority but there is often an interruption and delay to support being put in place. Parents have a right of appeal although their chances of success are slim; they are often confused about the process and trusting of the school's decision (Children's Commissioner Report, 2012, pp. 69-73). Permanent exclusion rates are appearing to fall. In 2004 9,800 pupils were permanently excluded (Reed, J. 2005) but by 2010 this had fallen to 5,740 (DFE-RR218, 2012). The reasons for this are two fold. Firstly there has been a determined effort to use managed moves instead of permanent exclusions. These allow schools to negotiate transfer of pupils into other local schools to give them a fresh start in a new environment. Whilst this can be positive ¹⁴ it is also prone to abuse with pupils often being passed from school to school without receiving the support they really need¹⁵. Secondly there is the notion of a 'referral' placement whereby the pupil remains on their school roll but is effectively educated off site at an alternative provision (Ogg and Kaill, 2010). Both of these mean that

¹⁴ <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2007/dec/11/pupilbehaviour.schools>

¹⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2012/nov/15/illegal-school-exclusions>

schools are able to offer alternatives to a permanent exclusion yet also allow schools to remove or reduce their responsibility for the pupil. Both of these affect the number of pupils recorded as permanently excluded but I do not believe you can equate a reduction in numbers as a reduction in need: the pupils have merely been displaced.

Another negative aspect of permanent exclusion is the lack of options that parents and pupils have. Unless they can get an exclusion over-turned, convince the school to offer a managed move/referral or offer home schooling, the only option is a PRU which is a local authority managed provision; pupils must be in suitable education by the 6th school day after exclusion¹⁶. PRUs do not have to offer the full National Curriculum and are regulated by Ofsted (Ogg and Kaill, 2010). PRUs are not the only providers of alternative provision as a variety of charities and companies run establishments. However these often have the ability to select which young people they take, leaving PRUs to often educate those pupils who are the most challenging (Ogg and Kaill, 2010).

The pupils can present as being very challenging often with underlying learning or family needs. Supporting them is not straight forward and often involves a lot of trial and error in finding the right balance and pathway; often problems run deeper than concerns at school and I am often left questioning how a school could exclude a child knowing the chaos in their lives. Yet the job is varied; no two days are ever the same and the frenetic pace often means that I feel complete physical and emotional exhaustion. At times this places stress on my relationships and 'life' and 'work' are often synonymous terms. Largely the responses of people asking me where I work vary from the confused ("Is that the insurance company in Reading?") to the awed ("You must be a saint to work there, *I never could!*"). The reality is more banal: they are young people who need a lot of support, care and love; I feel I could offer this and that they deserve it. It is not altruistic or self serving but a simple response to a simple need.

¹⁶https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269681/Exclusion_from_maintained_schools_academies_and_pupil_referral_units.pdf

Over the years the numbers of pupils coming have grown, especially those learners with special needs beyond that encompassed by SEBD. More and more learners have moderate to severe learning difficulties or are highly autistic which places additional stress on my ability to adequately support them. All of the pupils have struggled to cope in a mainstream setting and, for what ever reason, have been permanently or temporarily excluded. This means that they often present with challenging behaviour which is, at times, physically aggressive. My local authority has been trying to reduce the numbers of permanent exclusions so there are ever more creative ways to offer schools alternative choices. However we continue to end up as a bottle neck with pupils arriving more quickly than we can move them on. We have limited resources and a building that is falling down around us. I often feel that we are under valued.

Whilst the job is emotionally and physically challenging, my sanity is saved on a daily basis by the team who surround me. Working in such close proximity, where your only chance of solitude for seven hours is the few moments alone in the toilet, means that sometimes arguments and fallings out are inevitable. However these are balanced by moments of supreme joy, tenderness and friendship.

I hope this makes sense,

H

4.6 The unravelling of the plan

Like many things in life, you do not notice the subtle shifts and changes when you are caught up in the moment as this perspective often comes with hindsight or physical distance. I had only been researching in my classroom for a matter of months and therefore assumed that that data I was receiving was acceptable for the stage I was at (Hammersley, 2006) however I didn't have anything to compare my research gathering with. Yet I sensed that things had changed in the few short

months but I didn't know why or how. I decided to lay out all of the data that I had gathered so far to see if taking a step back from the research led to any insights. I pushed all of the tables in my classroom together and laid each piece of paper out grouping it in weeks. To see the whole thing visually was powerful as there appeared to be less paper than I had hoped to collect.

I had been collecting data produced by the three case study children for nearly 10 weeks and I had:

Liam - 5 written pieces, 4 photo of places in school he liked, 2 Fisher Price photos

Cain - 0 written pieces, 0 photos of places in school he liked, 2 Fisher Price photos

Marcus - 5 written pieces, 11 photos of places in school he liked, 2 Fisher Price photos

The first piece I asked them to complete was a thought bubble about emotions and what made them sad, happy and embarrassed. All three had completed the task but only Marcus handed one of his in:

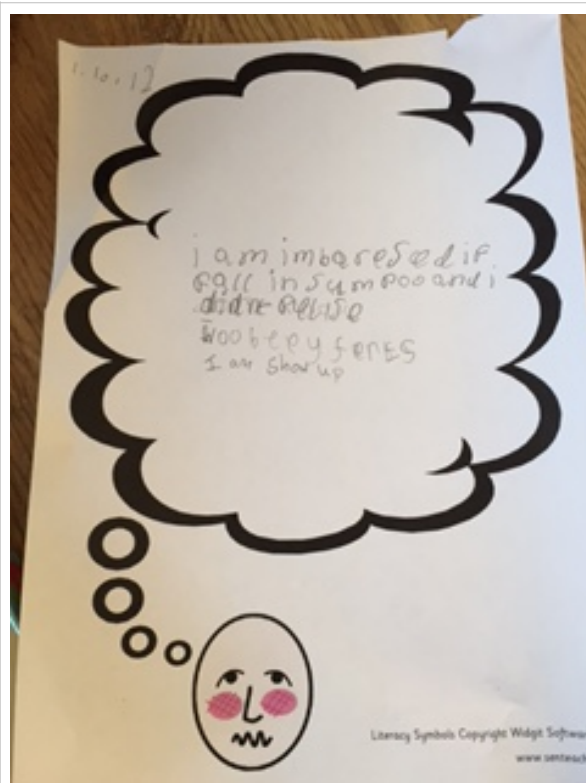


Figure 3 - Marcus - 1.10.12

"i am imbaresed if fall in sum poo and i didn't realise
woo beery ferts
I am shown up"

I am embarrassed if I fall in some poo and I didn't realise. Who be friends? I am shown up.

The second piece was a drawing of our classroom after a discussion about the differences between their old school and the PRU. All three had completed the task but only Marcus and Liam had shared their data:

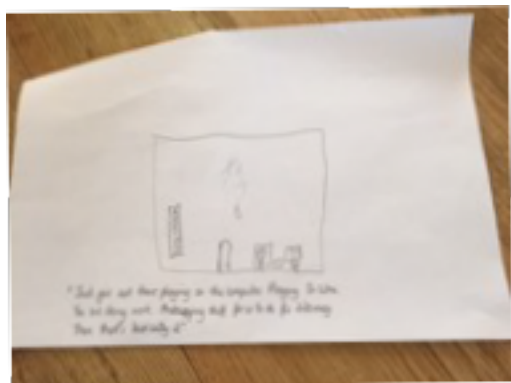


Figure 4 - Marcus - 3.10.12

*Just you sat there playing on a computer.
Playing Dr. Who. You are doing work.
Photocopying stuff for us to do for literacy.
Then that's basically it.*

Dictated to Helen Woodley

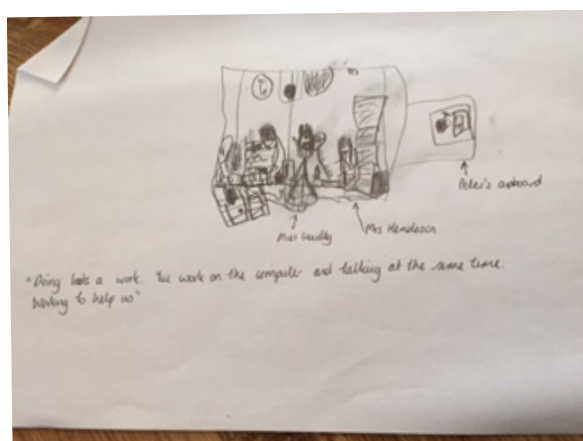


Figure 5 - Liam - 3.10.12

*Doing loads of works. You work on the
computer and talking at the same time.
Working to help us.*

Dictated to Helen Woodley

The third piece was about words that people might use to describe them in different settings as well as their own description of themselves. Again all three had completed it but only Marcus and Liam had submitted:

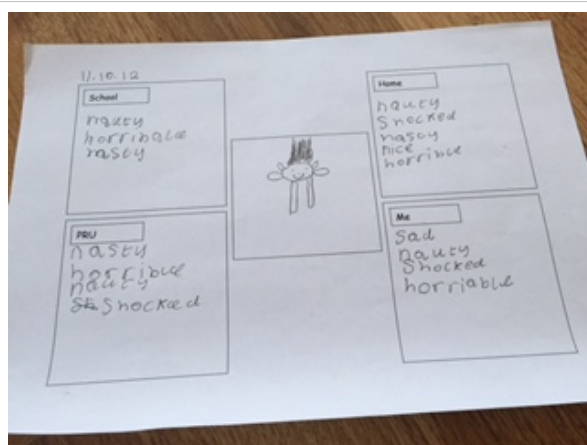


Figure 6 - Marcus - 11.10.12

School -nauty *naughty*, horribale *horrible*, nasty
 Home - nasty *naughty*, shocked, nasty, nice,horrible
 PRU - nasty, horrible, nauty *naughty*, shocked
 Me - sad, nauty *naughty*, shocked, horrible

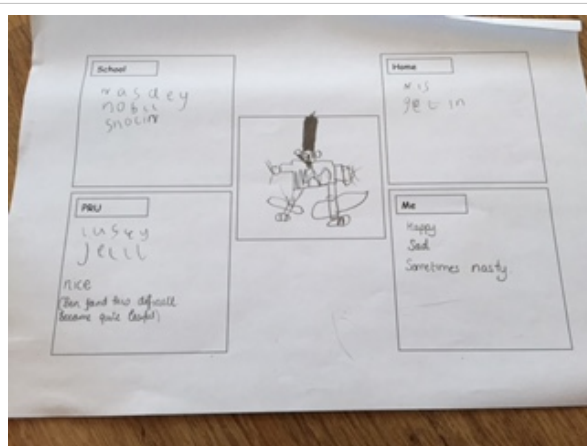


Figure 7 - Liam - 11.10.12

School - nasdey *nasty*, hobil *horrible*, shocin *shocking*
 Home - nis *nice*, get in
 PRU - lufey *lovely*, jetll *gentle*, nice (Liam found this difficult. Became quite tearful)
 Me - happy, sad, sometimes nasty

The fourth piece was a comparison between the emotions they felt at their excluding school and the PRU. Cain refused to complete the lesson, Marcus did but chose not to submit his. Liam handed his in:

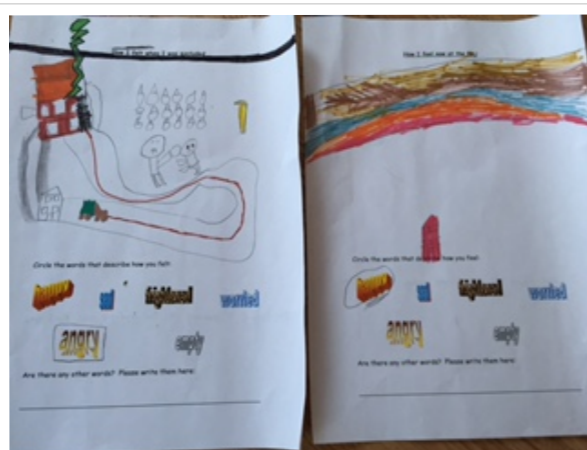


Figure 8 - Liam - 12.10.12

How I felt when I was excluded (left) - *I'm angry. I punched this kid and gave him black eyes.*
 How I feel now at the PRU (right) - *I feel happy coz I'm happy nearly every day.*

Dictated to Helen Woodley

The fifth piece was a PVT about being excluded. All three completed it but only Liam submitted:

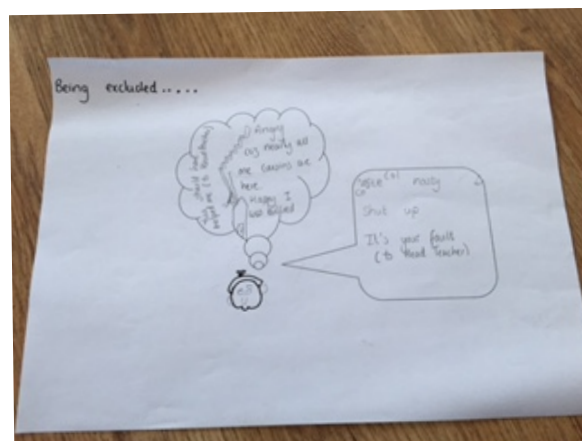


Figure 9 - Liam - 16.10.12

Thought - *You should have helped me (to the headteacher). Angry coz nearly all me cousins are here. Happy - I was bullied.*
 Said - *nasty. Shut up. It's Your fault (to the headteacher).*

Dictated to Helen Woodley

The final piece was open to them to write or draw what it was like going to a PRU. All three completed the task but only Marcus and Liam handed them in:

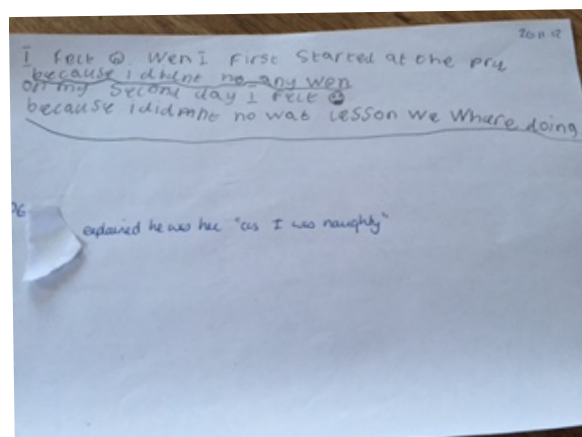
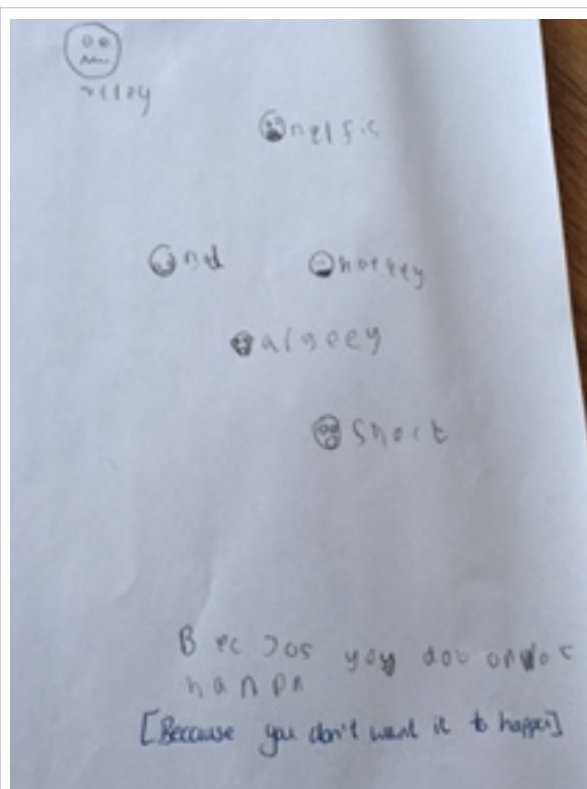


Figure 10 - Marcus - 17.10.12

I felt :(wen I first started at the pru because i didn't no any won
I felt sad when I first started at the PRU because I didn't know anyone.

On my second day I felt :/ because i did nt no way lesson we where doing
On my second day I felt angry because I didn't know what lesson we were doing.



weley *worried*, nalfic *nervous*, sad, happy,
argeey *angry*, short *shout*.

Bec jos you dot on wat hanpn
Because you don't want it to happen.

Figure 11 - Liam - 19.10.12

Regarding the paper activities I noticed three things. Firstly tasks that included writing were limited in what the pupils expressed without some adult intervention to scribe. This act of being a scribe freed up the pupils to be able to think about what they wanted to say rather than focusing on the mechanics of writing. In order to ensure that an accurate record of what they said was written, I scribed rather than giving this task to another adult in the classroom. However I was conscious that their spoken thoughts may well have been different to those that were written if they had been able to write with greater fluency. Secondly although Marcus and Liam had sat next to each other for every task and had clearly influenced each other in what to write there was a degree of difference in their thoughts and feelings, however these were not explored or developed. Thirdly I was unable to make a judgement on the use of PVTs which had been an earlier concern of mine (see Chapter 2) as I did not

have enough data submitted by the pupils. I still believed that my broad statement about cognitive abilities applied but I was not able to substantiate this in any detail.

Whilst the paper and photos of places that they liked in the PRU were whole class lessons, the Fisher Price kinaesthetic activity was part of a lesson but conducted on a 1:1 basis with notes recorded about what was said. All three pupils engaged and wanted their pictures included. The first activity was about what it was like on their last day at their school:



Figure 12 - Cain - 18.10.12

"I had to wait for dad to collect me."



Figure 13 - Liam - 18.10.12

"I punched him and everyone was shocked like."

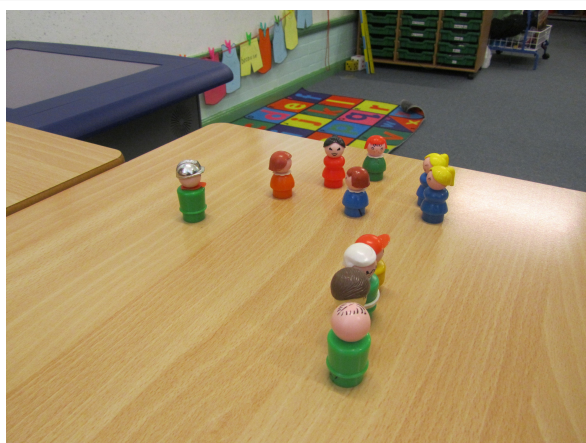


Figure 14 - Marcus - 18.10.12

"Everyone was angry and I went home."

The second activity was about being in the PRU. Again it was conducted on a 1:1 basis within a lesson:



Figure 15 - Cain - 19.10.12

"We line up for lunch in the corridor."



Figure 16 - Liam - 19.10.12

"You, me and Miss L."



Figure 17 - Marcus - 19.10.12

"Me playing."

All of the pupils, both case studies and supporting cases, responded well to the 1:1 activity which was kinaesthetic and short in length with pupils only required to be with me for 5 minutes at a time. This was in contrast with the written activities which were part of a 45 minute lesson and required the pupils to be in the classroom for the majority of the time.

Collecting data had been a lot harder than I imagined especially due to my intention of letting the pupils choose what they would hand in. Whilst I had not set out assuming that I would gather a lot, I had not factored into the collection the impact of daily life. My knowledge of working with pupils in the PRU over the years should have prepared me for the fact that completing work activities was often a challenge; low level behaviours, such as refusing to take their head off the table or throwing pencils, often meant that it took longer than expected to complete tasks, with several lessons a day running over into the next. Sometimes, as could be seen with Cain, pupils often did not attend lessons or disrupted them to such a degree that they were unable to continue. I cursed myself for assuming that my research would be any different. Crucially the realisation that the research methods I had read about were not applicable to my setting was frustrating. Even if I had been able to plan my research to have greater structure, there was no guarantee that the methods available would have been pertinent to my class any way (see Chapter 12). I was also frustrated that, in spite of my awareness of the potential tensions of pupils being active yet not full participants (Balen, 2006) discussed in Chapter 3, I had created a process of data collection that limited their participation and widened, rather than narrowed, the gap between myself as the researcher and my pupils as collaborators (Harriot Beazley, 2009).

My head wanted to plough on regardless with the data collection but my heart was more reflective. I had tried to complete a piece of action research along well established lines however I was aware that there were other ways of doing research and that some educators had already proved successful at doing something unique (Dadds et al., 2001). This encouraged me to rethink my methodology.

Chapter 5. Methodology Part Two

Jan 12	Feb 12	Mar 12	Apr 12	May 12	Jun 12	July 12	Aug 12	Sep 12	Oct 12	Nov 12	Dec 12	Jan 13	Feb 13	Mar 13	Apr 13	May 13	Jun 13

I had to get back to basics, to rediscover what my motivations were and where my heart was pulling me including my values about my relationship with my pupils. I was highly aware that I was often not a logically driven objective researcher but also a teacher with an emotional relationship with my pupils. I had kept a research journal for several months after learning about journaling in a lecture where a book by Moon was suggested reading (Moon, 1999). I found it useful to record and reflect upon what was happening both internally and externally (Ortlipp, 2008a). I spent some time going into myself trying to find answers to questions but I just went around in circles. I stopped trying to be a researcher and have a mindset of collecting data and refocused back on my role as a teacher, which was the most natural as I had been doing it for a decade. I realised that this was the role which my pupils saw, it was how they interacted with me on a daily basis due to the social structure of my classroom and the existing relationship we had (Cast et al., 1999). My life as a teacher was also the context to the research I was conducting (Goodson and Numan, 2002). It therefore seemed important to let this guide the flow of the research and I started to spend time reflecting upon our relationships and the identity that I presented in the classroom (for further discussion on this see Chapters 9 and 11).

I arranged another meeting with my supervisors to discuss my dilemma. We met in the department and went through the same pre-chat rituals as before. "Tea?" "No, coffee for me please. White with two." We sat on an assortment of mismatching chairs reminiscent of a doctor's waiting room in the 1970's. Breathing deeply in a vain attempt to ground myself I spilled out my situation, "I am doing woolly research or, at least, it is not the research which I had planned to do. For the first term I set about things as I had discussed: methodically and structured. But things changed and I realised that the data I was getting was not the rich data I had hoped for. So I have decided to stop collecting data in the way I had and step back and see what happens. I am spending more time reflecting and writing than I am collecting data." I was met with silence yet a smile passed between Erica and Dawn. Erica spoke first,

“Well. How do you feel about that?” I wrung my hands nervously and then, when I noticed what I was doing, I stopped. “I’m not sure. One moment I am certain that I am doing the right thing but I still have that nagging voice telling me I am doing it wrong. Stories. Everything hangs on that one word: stories. I have realised that the pupils have their own agenda in talking to me, they are telling me the stories that matter to them, the issues that they want to discuss shared in ways that suit them on that particular day at that specific moment in time. I want to truly illicit their perspectives and opinions, can I honestly do it by forcing my methods upon them? Would I not actually miss what they had to say? Stepping back feels the most appropriate way of working with them. Stephenson suggested that the act of stepping back from a narrow data collection method to something broader can allow other messages to be heard (Stephenson, 2009) and Gallas had suggested decades ago that even ordinary classroom events could provide deeper understanding (Gallas, 1994). I wonder what messages I may have missed them sharing because I was so focused on gathering paper. I feel like I am building a narrative of each of them (see Chapter 10) and that understanding the identities they present will tell me more about their feelings and perspectives of exclusion and attending the PRU than I could hope to get from the planned activities I had previously tried. I am still conscious that this leads to a degree of interpretation however I see this as an attempt to accurately reflect and report what happens, understanding the context that the data was gathered in, rather than trying to fully explain it in a definitive way as the only ‘truth’. I am taking a relativist ontological stance fully accepting that there is a plurality of truths and that any understanding drawn from them is dependent upon the situation that events happened within. This means that my understanding of data, and how it will be collected and analysed, will be affected by the specific circumstances. Within educational research there are two alternative opinions about *what* education is. Biesta makes a succinct comparison between those who view education as an activity and those who view it as part of a more complicated system which includes relationships and an ongoing evolutionary process generated by those who are within it; the former is often criticised by educational researchers and teachers alike (Biesta, 2015). The first position can be seen in Clandinin and Murphy’s criticism of some researchers who view themselves as omniscient (Clandinin and Murphy, 2009); I certainly would never claim full knowledge of my pupils as could we ever claim to ‘know’ everything about another person? The relativist ontological stance sits within the latter understanding for it is entirely

dependent upon the environment and the relationships in the space being researched; my research and data are dependent upon the relationship with my pupils.”

Dawn glanced up from her notes and looked at me searchingly, “So, where are these ontological beliefs from?”. I smiled, “That was harder to unpick as they were not beliefs that I took on, it was simply the way I made sense of what was around me. Yet reading about it strengthened my knowledge and certain articles informed my understanding. In particular Heidegger’s notion of *being* in the world, an idea heavily influenced by the philosophy of Plato, where we are constantly engaging with people and activities and are open to multiple possibilities (Dall’Alba and Barnacle, 2007).

Bearing that in mind, I see my research as being more naturalistic with the focus on the subjects - the pupils (Guba, 1979). I want to research about who the pupils are, what they think and where they are situated (Sandelowski, 2000). I hope that these stories will reveal their reality and their lived experiences as they perceived them to be at that moment in time; I do not intend to claim that it is the only perspective that can be offered.”

Dawn spoke, “So you want to see what happens? How are you recording all of this if you are not planning your preferred neat cycles of research?” I replied with more confidence than I felt, “In my journal, I have found it useful to reflect upon what has happened (Moon, 1999). They offer me snippets of stories, incidents acted out with toys, one liners, a certain look. Sometimes they come in a flood, at other times nothing. So I record parts of conversations and I write about what has been happening and how I have responded and felt. I write about my part in the environment we share for large parts of the day, my thoughts and feelings. The pupils are both the object and subject, I am directing my research towards their needs and they are also the reason for my research (O’Reilly, 2008). Yet the journal is also reflexive and about my experiences and thoughts too (Ortlipp, 2008a); I am a central character in the story of my classroom.” Dawn spoke again, “So how would *you* describe what your research has become? It is clearly not the Action Research you started with.”

This was the question I was dreading for the words I wanted to use felt strange in my mouth, “It’s ethnographic; I am listening to their voices and in order to do that I have stepped back from them so that I can hear messages that I might otherwise miss

(Stephenson, 2009). I am trying to respond to what they say and do as well as trying to understand my own responses. I am inhabiting the space between (Buckle, 2009b).” In rapid succession Dawn fired off a question, “And you still count this as ‘woolly’? Or has your opinion changed?” It was my turn to smile, “No, it isn’t woolly. It is not what I was expecting to do but I have chosen to go with the flow. I am trying to understand how my identity as a teacher has affected my relationships with the pupils and vice versa; how I see myself and how they see me (Søreide, 2006). We inhabit the same world and our interactions affect each other; I need to view that world in an ‘anthropological understanding’ as Geertz discusses (Geertz, 1974). I need to see how I have traversed the line between teacher and researcher and what affect that has had on my research (Nikolaidou, 2013). I want to tell their story but I think it is more my story of them rather than me gathering their stories. O’Reilly would probably label it as being ‘critical ethnography’ as the research is interactive-inductive, meaning that the research design has grown and changed as it has gone along (O’Reilly, 2008). My research has a strong autoethnographic leaning as my story and experiences provide the stage that the pupils’ experiences are presented upon (Ellis, 2004). I don’t fully understand it yet; it is going to take a while to reflect upon it and make sense (Freese, 2006).”

5.1 A reflection on narrative

I knew I needed to understand the role of narrative and story. Stories have been part of humanity from the beginning: many stories, of many places, in many voices, pointing towards many ends (Cronon, 1992). A narrative is a collection of stories which aim to give a temporal understanding of events (Sandelowski, 1991). Narratives are how we learn the history of our families, of our culture, of world events; they are how we pass on moral teachings, and how we are instructed into society; they allow us to link different events and experiences (Kramp, 2003). Although narratives may be fundamentally stories, they are ways of explaining and passing information on and can therefore contain elements of truth even if the whole narrative could not be understood to be so; a ‘narrative truth’ (Spence, 1984). There are, of course, a multitude of different ‘truths’: a story could be historically true, or psychologically true; it could contain a telling of an event that was explained with the knowledge of the age or a spiritual truth. An example of this is the differing ways that

one can read the books of Old Testament known to those of the Jewish faith as the Torah and Talmud. These books contain a spiritual truth for those of the Jewish faith and some scholars seek to use them to support historical truths. Yet they can also be read aesthetically as literature designed to be read for pleasure; a biblical story, even if one conceives of it as fiction, can contain elements of truth about human relationships or opinions of historical events (Alter, 2004).

Narrative is a form of communication (Coste, 1990). We tell stories every day to a variety of different people in a variety of different ways: our journey to work, what happened over Christmas, how we come to follow a football team. We tell stories through writing, verbally and through action. The whole of human life is an extended narrative communicated in a multitude of ways to a seemingly never ending audience. Through narratives we continually share our identity as it shifts and changes and also understand ourselves. Narratives give people a voice where they have been previously silenced (Merrill and West, 2009). In the case of pupils who have been permanently excluded, this is especially the case. They exist in a world where narratives are told about them either through the legal paperwork of exclusion or through records of eye witness accounts of their misdemeanours. The pupils themselves are not part of this story telling process; their opinions are not recorded because they are not called for. Many do not know that they have been excluded and that the last time they were sent home from school was the final time they would set foot in a building they may have known intimately for many years. So giving space for pupils to voice their narratives, their version (or versions) of the truth, is truly giving them a voice which has hitherto been unheard. They have had limited opportunities to tell their stories as the focus has been on the negatives in their lives: disrupted families and poor behaviour. Goodson, when discussing the stories of teachers, discussed that their voices are often unheard as those with less power are only able to tell a portion of a story as they are not party to the wider picture (Goodson, 1994). It is the same for the pupils too - they have less power and are only aware of the fraction of the wider picture. Allowing them space to share their voice is not simply about allowing a hidden truth to come into the light. Instead it is about giving them the space to story that 'truth' which they may have previously not even thought about. Therefore their voice is about self reflection and developing 'truth' rather than simply a void in which to share an established concept.

The notion of truth is a complex matter. Narratives do not offer a universal 'truth' instead they offer multiple truths or ask us to question what truth is; a narrative 'truth' can be achieved through a rendering of a story which is internally acceptable to the teller in that place or time (Sandelowski, 1991). Narratives are not always reliable for tellers exaggerate, manipulate or are 'creative' in their expression of events (Fitzpatrick, 2015). We admonish small children for 'telling tales' as if the generation of a story is negative. Yet we then tell our own tales which change and adapt often to meet our own needs, allowing us to be positive agents in our own past and create a narrative identity we are at peace with (McAdams and McLean, 2013).

Narratives are often criticised for placing too much emphasis on the individual instead of the wider social context that individuals exist within (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Whilst in some cases this may be valid, it could be argued that looking at the individual experience of a cultural or social process can actually shed light on the process itself and how it affects individual life experiences (Nelson, 2003). A psychology based approach seeks to understand not only what is said but what is not said therefore an understanding of theories of self and identity is crucial (Larsson and Sjöblom, 2010). This approach seeks to understand what is happening at an individual level. A more sociological based approach is more focused on the relationships that individuals have with each other and view the self as constantly shifting. It is focused on how individuals have constructed events and what they choose to tell or not tell in a story. Individuals construct an identity through their actions and stories (Kohler Riessman, 2013). Both personal experience and a more societal view can be found in an education setting. These individual pupil 'stories' could be pulled together to view a wider social narrative; a 'narrative inquiry' (Huber et al., 2013). Narratives allow for a sense of personal reflection and self development. They allow us to play with concepts and ideas and give us a sense of personal autonomy.

Narrative inquiry, has three distinct elements: temporality (life is always in transition), sociality (personal and social concerns) and place (all events happen in specific places)(Clandinin et al., 2007). When researching pupils who have been excluded these elements are certainly true. Firstly the pupils are at the PRU for a fixed period of time having been excluded from a school and awaiting transfer to a new school. The inquiry is also predominantly about social concerns both on an individual level and at a wider cultural level for each individual's narrative(s) is a personal story

highlighting the individual as part of a wider social group of those who have been educationally excluded. Finally, as the research is conducted within the classroom setting and within the framework of a pupil/teacher relationship there is an element of the specific about it.'

5.2 Ontological and epistemological interlude part two

Several weeks later Charlie popped over after work. I was keen to tell him about some of the changes I had experienced, "I am a lot further forward in my thinking since we last discussed this. I know my thinking tended to see the world as a fixed entity to understand in a realist sense (Marcus and Cushman, 1982). I saw my class and my life with them as static however my research has showed that this was not the case and we are part of an ever ebbing and flowing relationship. Now I see things in a more reflexive way; I am trying to make sense of the world of my classroom, trying to understand how it shapes my own actions and responses through ethnography (Smit and Fritz, 2008) which is ultimately grounded in interpretivism." Charlie nodded, "So how does that change your perspective on your thesis?" I handed him a coffee as I spoke, "Well I am helping to construct meaning from the data I have gathered and my relationships with my pupils so that I can reflect their stories for others to see; my understanding of what has happened gives the thesis a sociological relevance (Gilbert, 2008) yet I accept the relativism of my research as I am presenting my 'truth' of what the pupils offered from my specific context and view. My thesis is an expression of how I am making sense of the world through this unique window that Mychalovskiy talks about (Hertz, 1997). Our knowledge is socially constructed (Dewey, 2004) but society is merely a collection of individuals with their own experiences (Elias, 2001) and those experiences matter. It is therefore important that the pupils' authentic selves, and mine, show through. As Bamberg suggests, narratives aid us in arranging our identity (Bamberg, 2011) and it is these stories that can construct and show our authentic selves".

"Isn't there a danger that you can become too self absorbed? (Geertz, 1988); what knowledge does your thesis generate for others as opposed to being purely self indulgent?" he said. I smiled, "I have been conscious of that, it would be easy for my thesis to become a form of personal therapy and some have criticised

autoethnography for the evocative pieces eclipsing the use of the method for analytical means (Anderson, 2006) or for creating pieces that are uncomfortable, and potentially unethical, for the reader to accept (Méndez, 2013). However I want to take a broader look and to be able to draw some theoretical conclusions or, at least, discuss the possibility of doing so. In the same way that I am using social constructivism to form an understanding, I aim to build knowledge too."

Charlie's frowned, "I don't think that your research view is radically different from before. I think you are just clearer and more confident in where you are coming from and more confident in discussing a theoretical underpinning. Before I think there was a definite clash between how you felt and how you felt you should act. Now I think there is a definite shift in you being able to match your actions and feelings together." I smiled, "I feel that too. I am more at ease with my thesis. I didn't have the knowledge or experience to be able to express how I felt. I had never engaged with such deep questions about my own practice before. Being a teacher is largely about the day to day living of the role; I had not questioned how my thoughts and actions fitted in with existing theories and philosophies - I teach people how to count to 5 for heaven's sake! I didn't see my small world as part of a greater universe but I suppose that is a positive effect of engaging in practitioner research (Kincheloe, 2012)."

Charlie sipped his coffee, "Couldn't you have developed as a teacher and learnt all of this through another means? It isn't like this ethnographic and highly personal route was the only way to develop?" I nodded, "Without doubt! But the benefit of auto ethnography is the understanding of self and culture that it brings (Chang, 2008) and that seemed especially important to me working within a culture that was rapidly changing and affecting my personal and professional life. Ultimately it fitted so well with the journey of discovery I was on." He looked at me quizzically, "What purpose does it serve?" "I need to back track a bit, to explain where I am before I can discuss that. I feel that I have progressed in my epistemological outlook since we first met. I wanted to find some kind of measure of my own progress and stumbled upon the Reflective Judgement Model by chance (King and Kitchener, 1994) where I felt I was floating around the early stages (King and Kitchener, 1994). This framework looks at how complex reasoning skills develop in adults and the early stages are about what 'feels' right without the depth of knowledge behind that response (Li, 2007). I had

developed some quasi-reflective thinking but I didn't have the language to explain what I believed and why, I just felt it and didn't understand why. Now I would place myself at stage 7 where I feel I am able to reflect deeply; I still make heart judgements such as running with the spontaneous research from the pupils, but I engage with why I make those choices and have some knowledge of myself and the situation (King and Kitchener, 1994). I couldn't have discussed the purpose of my research before but now I feel that it is a descriptive narrative within an auto-ethnographic framework where I explain the situation I am existing within (Sandelowski, 1991), which in turn drives my relativistic ontological stance. Descriptive Narratives can be used to highlight moral and ethical practice (Reitzug and Reeves, 1992) and I have been able to give an insight into working in a PRU and the lives of the young children who were educated there, which I believe is both morally and ethically crucial for young people with social and emotional needs as it places the pupil at the heart of the research process (O'Connor et al., 2011). Added to that I highlight the impact of national, local and institutional change on an individual teacher."

Chapter 6. Methodology Part Two - continued: 'autoethnography'

Jan 12	Feb 12	Mar 12	Apr 12	May 12	Jun 12	July 12	Aug 12	Sep 12	Oct 12	Nov 12	Dec 12	Jan 13	Feb 13	Mar 13	Apr 13	May 13	Jun 13

I understood how my own stories affected myself directly but not how much influence they might have had upon my adult decisions (McAdams, 2001). It seemed, at first, that my research in pupil's stories was circumstantial: I worked with them spending more time with them than anyone else in the world, more than with my own family. Yet I never questioned why and how I ended up working with them, I saw it purely as the situation I was in when I started the thesis and therefore they were the most likely voices to represent in my research. Yet reading an article by Conle (Conle, 2000) made me question that simple understanding. Conle discussed the importance of her own narrative as a German national born in World War II yet living and teaching in Canada. For Conle, her 'self' narratives played an important part in understanding who she was as through writing she felt able to reflect and realised that the road of her life and the road of her academic study 'became one road' (Conle, 2000, p. 193).

It seemed a logical next step to see if this applied to my own life as well. Initially I was sceptical: I did not share the same socio-economic background as the young children I was working with so struggled to see how my personal life and my academic life had converged. Whilst unpacking books out of boxes at home, I was reminiscing about who had given them to me and the circumstances I had been given them in. The juxtaposition of the books made me think back to what Conle was discussing, for the books on the shelves were tangible markers on my own life's road. They represented stages in my life but were there common themes that linked them? Did they hold any significance for how I ended up researching the stories of young excluded children?

6.1 Theme One: Acceptance and Personhood – *Jesus the Jew* (Vermes, 1981)

I brought this book in Cambridge. I had been to Benedict's house, a fellow theologian, during the long summer vacation and I had seen it on his father's bookcase. I had a lot of respect for his liberal Catholic parents and spent a summer

evening sitting in their garden discussing the multifaceted portrayals of Jesus through the centuries as opposed to how Jesus and his immediate family would have seen him. The book is a reminder of that summer, of being accepted into a world where I was finally an adult capable of adult conversations and concepts; an equal.

I grew up in a village and my memories of these times are warm: eating corn on the cob, visiting next door to play with their pet three-legged fox, sitting in the fields behind church watching the butterflies dance. Yet these social times were balanced by solitary experiences that were equally as positive: setting up the slide projector in the upstairs corridor, making mud pies in the garden, reading on the floor of my room. I was always encouraged to be myself. My parents were particularly skilled in giving their opinions but allowing me to make my own mind up even if they disagreed. By the end of Sixth Form, when I had decided to apply to read Theology instead of Law, they were supportive and accepting of my decision. They offered unconditional acceptance of my choice.

At university I was in a world of academia and felt at home. University was a land of self-discovery and everything that I thought was known about who I was and how I responded was put through a refiner's fire. It was a form of self-imposed purgatory; a chrysalis whereby the naïve teenager who entered left as a relatively capable adult. It was a period of growth and creation which was then ready to be shown to the world.

6.2 Theme Two: Love and Compassion – *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (Solzhenitsyn, 1971)

This was the first book I had ever read by a Russian author. I loved Russian history at school and a large part of my History A-Level was dedicated to the subject. I gradually became obsessed with the country and the people, branching out from reading non-fiction texts to novels from a range of Russian authors. This particular book had sat on my parents' shelves for many years. I had no idea where it had come from and neither did my parents. Whatever the case, the message of the book was powerful enough to stay with me and every so often I reread it to taste the bitter sweet pain of life in a Russian Gulag, as far removed from my own life as a life could possibly be. I could not imagine living in that world of pain and suffering and was

aware that such a world was not simply contained within the pages of a book but was a reality for many people in the here and now.

I had been a poorly child and was eventually diagnosed with Coeliac disease. My life was dominated by the illness: it dictated what I ate, how I slept and how I spent my waking hours. I cannot have been an easy child for my parents, especially my mother, who had put her teaching career on hold to have a second baby and was rewarded with one who was so hyperactive she did not sleep and who ate so little she was visibly malnourished. I was loved despite the stress I caused. My childhood was one of unbridled happiness and protection from any pain and suffering.

This love from my family was transferred into my own way of viewing the world. As my awareness grew that for many their lives were not as peaceful and untroubled as my own, I realised that I needed to do something, anything to help. Aged 18 I sent a 40ft container of winter clothes to a small town in the south of Russia where the winter temperatures drop to -25 degrees. At university this social action developed alongside my academic study and personal belief systems. I became enthralled with Liberation Theology and its call to support the poorest in society and began to investigate my own sense of vocation and the possibility of ordination in the Church of England. Feeling as loved as I did made me notice the absence of that love all the more. I took on wayward stragglers from all sort of backgrounds, some human, some not. I seemed to be drawn towards lives lived at the margins of society; I adopted cats that were due to be destroyed and crows that were unable to fly. Most of all I wanted to help.

6.3 Theme Three: Relationships – *The Wind in the Willows* (Grahame, 2012)

Like many children of my generation the TV series of 'The Wind in the Willows' was considered to be prime viewing. The characters seemed to be so real, so full of life although they were merely clay; their friendship and relationships stood out. As I got older I wanted to read the book and fell in love with chapter 7 – The Piper at the Gates of Dawn. As I grew up that chapter continued to stand out for Rat and Mole shared a profound experience, one which shaped and strengthened their relationship and led them to develop the deepest of friendships. Their relationship of love and trust, in spite of their differences, seemed to be a perfect model to aspire to.

My childhood was full of people and pets. As the only two grandchildren in the family, my brother and I had the undivided attention of our parents and grandparents. French Eurocamp holidays eating Dauphinois potatoes from a tin, playing Othello with my grandmother, and eating Pineapple Snow in a room unchanged from the 1950s. My brother played a huge role in my life: I idolised and hero worshipped him.

Outside of my family relationships I had my own friendships. I still possess a tin of notes passed in corridors between lessons over several years and I count the names signed on those notes as friends even if our lives have led us in different directions. University offered a plurality of relationship opportunities some of which led to long term life choices and this development of friendships continued after university and extended into every aspect of my life, including my work.

These relationships, both family and not, both old and new, provided stability and sustenance during the ebbs and flows of life and I continued to want to develop and nurture them.

6.4 Theme Four: Hope and Dreams – *The Trans-Siberian Handbook* (Thomas, 2000)

After I had visited Russia as an impressionable 19 year old I had longed to return and to do the ultimate journey: Moscow to Vladivostock on the Trans-Siberian railway. I became obsessed with planning my journey: excursions to Lake Baikal, a few days with the shamanistic Tuva people, a stopover at the Jewish Autonomous Oblast and Birobidzhan. To date I have never made that journey. It has been postponed several times over the years and the next date has varied from wedding anniversaries to 'big' birthdays. At some point in my life paths will converge that will allow the dream to finally exist as a reality but until then it will remain something to aspire to, a possible future.

I have always been a daydreamer. As a child I can remember having three distinct hero figures that I wished to be: Darth Vader, Cruella De Vil and Mumm-Ra. Although not the *niciest* of characters, they did all have characteristics I admired as all three were confident in their own abilities and one was even capable of redemption. Whilst I never seriously entertained the possibility of being an evil villain as a life path, I did have numerous 'things' I wanted to do or be in life. I wanted to travel, especially to

Russia. I wanted to be a fireman and drive the engine. I wanted to be a teacher like my mother. I wanted to own an animal rescue centre and have a donkey called Ned. I wanted to get straight As at A-Level. I was given space to dream these dreams however unlikely and, more to the point, I was encouraged to do so.

At university I had dreams of doing some sort of pastoral, nurturing work. I explored ordination as a possible means of being able to fulfil this hope and again found support to explore and imagine. At no time was this flicker of a vocation ridiculed or dismissed yet neither was it imposed upon me. I was simply given space and time to ponder. Hopes have sustained me; they have been doors to aim towards, possibilities, and potential. They are not always achieved and, at times, some have faded or lost importance. Yet the death of one is replaced by another so, like Pandora's box, there is always hope.

6.5 Tying the knot – contingent analytic autoethnography

I believe that the four themes that I have taken for granted during the narrative of my own life are often the parts missing from the lives of those I taught in the PRU. So many of the children who have walked into my classroom have had some or all of those themes missing or damaged in their lives.

The four themes that have journeyed with me are unsurprisingly those which I have noticed a lack of, or a disparity with, in the lives of others. Without reflecting upon my own life story this may not have been apparent; deep reflection has needed time and space to turn my experience into conscious thought (Freire, 1973). The significance of my own journey and its relationship to the way that I view and understand the world is crucial when looking at the motivations for seeking to highlight the narratives of the children I have taught: I firmly felt that this was an educational vocation and not simply a professional role (Schwarz, 1999). I had never intended to write about myself yet through doing the research I was able to see my own connection to the data being gathered. This contingent autoethnography led to a rewriting of my own life story (Ellis, 2004) which has included my life as teacher of young children who have been permanently excluded. This, combined with narrative inquiry, highlighted the interwoven-ness that narratives sometimes have and their impact upon our actions and thoughts; the multiple threads and patterns, which hint at synchronicity,

led to a narrative ethnography (Ellis, 2004) that was descriptive of my past experiences in order to understand my responses and relationships with my pupils. The epiphany I had experienced in understanding that I needed to allow my research to be led by the pupils would allow my own narrative thread to join with those of my pupils; through my story of their lives I would be able to give a voice to those previously denied the chance to speak (Denzin, 2014). However it was important that this research can be used to draw broad generalisations and not merely aim to draw an emotional response from any potential readers (Anderson, 2006); I did not want it to be purely evocative.

The effect upon my data was huge for I began to realise that I, Helen, was as much of the data as the pieces of paper stored in the green classroom tray. I saw that the narratives I was telling and pulling together were data rich in thoughts, ideas and emotions; I was part of the process of building and shaping narratives with my pupils (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).

Over the years my research questions had subtly shifted. I was still keen to compare the school account of exclusion to that of the pupils; I was interested in why some stories were given more weight than others and how those stories were recorded and told. Yet my questions had also widened to include asking how my relationship with the pupils affected their story telling and how my own life story led me to draw conclusions about all the stories I heard. I also wanted to explore how the use of autoethnography and narrative could be used to discuss and share sensitive information in an ethical way, so that the heart of what was being shared was not lost even if the setting and plot was altered. After much thought I felt that I could summarise my questions as being:

Research question 1 - What is the affect of my relationship with pupils who have social and emotional needs on the pupils? On myself?

Research question 2 - How does a teacher's understanding of who pupils are impact upon their classroom practice and identity?

Research question 3 - How can autoethnography and narratives be used to research and share sensitive information when working with pupils who have social and emotional needs?

My data would be drawn from the spontaneous pieces of work from the pupils as well as my own reflective writing about them. However it would also include my own writing about myself as data with my writing being part of my inquiry (Richardson and St Pierre, 2008). My thoughts and feelings would be made visible therefore making the research process transparent (Ortlipp, 2008b). The data would therefore consist of visual, written and autobiographical pieces which would be used to construct and reconstruct a narrative aimed at understanding the relationships within my classroom and the affect of my classroom practice on pupils excluded to a PRU.

Chapter 7. Literature Review Part Two

Jan 12	Feb 12	Mar 12	Ap 12	May 12	Jun 12	July 12	Aug 12	Sep 12	Oct 12	Nov 12	Dec 12	Jan 13	Feb 13	Mar 13	Ap 13	May 13	Jun 13

7.1 Narratives

Stories were heavily on my mind as my research had delivered multiple layers of stories: in the recent past and distant, real and imagined, teacher and pupil. My starting belief about narratives was that we could become, for better or worse, the stories we are told about ourselves (Brumer, 2004). I had seen this not only in the ways that my pupils spoke of themselves as being 'bad' but in my own stories of myself as being a researcher or in family stories; we often feel that we understood more about ourselves by looking back on these stories (Polkinghorne, 1995). There was also a belief that we become the hero of our own saga and that it is not the stories that others tell but those of our own creation that have the most impact (McAdams, 1993). However I felt that this personal story was still influenced by those we heard from others, both in the sense of giving us a foundation to build upon, or as something to react against.

There were simply a multitude of ways that narratives could be understood.

Narratives could be seen as a means of sharing history often with a hermeneutic understanding of what the characters did and the background that might have been hidden at the time (Davidson, 1984). Although I understood this in principle due to my awareness for needing to adequately 'place' the stories in a specific moment, I was concerned about over interpreting the stories my pupils told and was keen to try and present them as untouched as possible. This allowed for events to be looked at from a distance and the most logical story to be drawn out (White, 1984). However there are criticisms of such an approach as to how one copes with differing historical accounts of the same event (DeMallie, 1993) as discussed with the film '12 Years a Slave'¹⁷. I did not want to present a single conclusive narrative and say 'this is what happened'. Instead I wanted to present my pupil's stories as a narrative and not *the* narrative of their exclusion. My use of fictionalised narratives enabled me to not only

¹⁷<http://savageminds.org/2014/04/30/12-years-a-slave/>

present real events that happened, an exclusion, but also to present the unheard stories of the pupils (Sparkes, 1997); I could present the stories as they told them even when I knew that the stories they told were not historically true (Hecht, 2007). This meant that I could share narratives without offering a definitive interpretation instead sharing the story of my own response to what I witnessed. This was crucial as I was aware that I did not want to fix the pupil stories and present them as a finished product; they were a moment in time, a snapshot of how the pupils perceived the world and shared this as part of a specific relationship. I believe their stories of exclusion will continue to develop and grow organically and will also change depending upon who they were being told to and who continues to tell them (Sandelowski, 1991). Whilst my use of narratives has an overlap with a constructivist Grounded Theory framework specifically the belief in a unidimensional reality (Charmaz, 2000) which is constantly re-constructed with every telling (Sandelowski, 1991), my research differs from Grounded Theory in that it is not aiming to be theory producing (Glaser and Strauss, 1968) but instead is intended to be a presentation of their stories as part of a wider picture of voice and identity. Their stories would not be purely factual as they would be influenced by our mutual relationship and our shared understanding of the specific moments they presented; they would be a reflection of what I experienced constructed from my relativist understanding of our shared classroom space and would be drawn from our shared relationship. This was one area I was keen to understand more since it had taken a focus as a key research question (Chapter 6; research questions 1 and 2).

From a linguistic perspective there has been research conducted about the structure of what is said by the story tellers (Labov, 2010). Narrative research with children often broadened the view by looking at isolating themes rather than focusing on the specific words that had been said (Katz, 2013). Yet this seemed to be a rather narrow view of narrative focusing on the verbal communication, rather than the non-verbal. Although some research focused on these vocalised narratives there was an awareness of non verbal communication and story telling too (Johnson, 2001; Cohn et al., 2012). Research showed that the use of play/non-verbal narratives to accompany verbal narratives revealed a deeper understanding of the beliefs held by very young children (Pass et al., 2012). The use of a broader understanding of narratives was especially important when working with children with Special Educational Needs (Vandewalle et al., 2012). Narrative inquiry appeared to be an

attempt not just to understand the 'what' of the story but the 'why' as well and to draw from this a particular view of an event/events (Clandinin et al., 2007). For my research this was about the stories that children told about themselves and their exclusion from school. However there were concerns that the narratives of children did not often contain information on self and identity instead often reporting back information about themselves from important adult relationships (Uszyńska-Jarmoc, 2004), or they would show an internalisation of these opinions both of which could naturally distort the data I collected. I was also keen to find a way to share some of the more ethically sensitive information discussed in chapter 4 and had an emerging view that narratives could play a role in developing this (Chapter 6; research question 3).

This issue of power in relationships was important and was something I knew I had to be mindful of especially the unequal balance in the classroom (Jamieson and Thomas, 1974). I was aware that the pupils had already experienced a sense of powerlessness in their permanent exclusion and that even their previous teachers may have experienced the same feelings in the face of school or authority pressure to exclude (Carlile, 2011). I certainly did not want to collect data through exerting my power as a teacher. Yet children live in a society dominated by adults and they expect this to be the case (Punch, 2002b). The concept of what it is to be a child and the notion of childhood has constantly changed over the centuries (King, 2007) yet our modern understanding is not of children as miniature adults but as a different to adults (Punch, 2002c). This concept has naturally influenced the education system and in the UK it is largely built upon the principles of adults as the voice of authority. Whilst being aware that this was the case, I was conscious that I did not want to abuse the authority I had as a teacher and wanted to forge a relationship of trust and mutual respect rather than totalitarianism.

Although I felt that the link between stories, memories and history was important, I was conscious that narratives were more than an internal reference library of a personalised fiction¹⁸ or the fictionalising of real events. My personal stance kept returning to viewing story telling through narratives as a form of communication (Coste, 1990; Bochner and Ellis, 1992) and that they could also be interpreted as a

¹⁸<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/jan/13/our-memories-tell-our-story>

means of understanding our selves (Polkinghorne, 1991; Sparrowe, 2005). For both of these stand points, the stories we tell can be said to be about how we wish to be understood by others (Bamberg, 2011). Whilst I agreed with many elements of these approaches there was a tendency to view the endpoint of stories as moral engagement in understanding *how* things are (Cronon, 1992) rather than the quest for understanding *why* things are. However it was not just the stories of my pupils that interested me but the growing awareness of my own story and its relationship to the stories I was telling, especially related to my identity as a teacher which had become a key research question (Chapter 6; research question 2).

7.2 Teacher identity

Having worked as a teacher for more than a decade, I was used to mixing both professionally and socially with those who titled themselves as teachers. It is important to clarify that many people ‘teach’ from singing teachers to yoga teachers. However the specific understanding of the word ‘teacher’ that was relevant for myself was that of a professional who taught in a school or college¹⁹. The concept of a professional teacher within a school is relatively new in the history of education and was largely born out of the desire to educate the population with the rise of the industrial revolution (Gillard, 2011). Through my research, I realised that my understanding of myself as a teacher came from two areas: the micro narratives of my personal story and the macro narratives of teacher training and my subsequent career.

At the micro level, I was the daughter of a Special Needs teacher and had grown up in a world of marking and Baker Days²⁰. I was also heavily influenced by my own experiences of being a pupil and the impact that good teaching can have upon a pupil (see Chapter 9). These personal influences led me to train to be a teacher and encounter the macro narratives of the training system.

The UK training system for teachers has become broad with a mixture of University training and school based courses both of which lead to trainees obtaining a Postgraduate Certificate in Education. My own teacher training was during a time

¹⁹<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/teacher>

²⁰<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/letters/article3107115.ece>

when such courses were purely university based. There has been criticism of such courses for perpetuating educational myths by teaching them to trainees who, in turn, pass them on to their pupils (Britzman, 1986). However such a view has been contested by research into the aspirations and fears of trainee teachers which contains a focus on hope and the desire to change (Orland-Barak and Maskit, 2011). Either way, such large scale narratives are only one influence on a teacher, especially once they have started their career. So, what is teacher identity?

Teacher identity is a difficult term to define as the research of Beauchamp and Thomas highlights the multifaceted nature of the term (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009). Rather than being fixed, the teacher's identity is constantly shaped by many factors including motivation and type of job role they have. If one understand motivation as the inner circle in a ring, it is possible to work outwards with other influences upon teacher identity. Regarding motivation, there has been research into the reasons why people entered the profession which has investigated the role of teachers as 'mother' (Casey, 1990), as following a spiritual calling (Nagahara, 2009) or those wishing to pass on knowledge (Van Driel et al., 2001)

This motivational element then has an effect on the next ring which is the specific type of teacher they become such as being a secondary subject specialist when their role influences how they understand their purpose in the classroom (Rex et al., 2002), and the specific need for their specialist skills (Brown and McNamara, 2011).

There is the continued influence of professional development which makes up a third ring which impacts on the future roles they will have (Opfer et al., 2011), and their access to new concepts (Brindley, 2015) although the engagement of teachers with academic research is debated (Cain, 2015).

It is therefore impossible to define what teacher identity is and, as Curwood highlights, a dialogical approach to understanding identity is needed where identity is viewed as a continuum, constantly shifting and changing (Curwood, 2014). If we apply this to the rings discussed above, one could view the motivational ring as being the only one fixed, due to its historic elements, and the other rings being more fluid and apt to change.

7.3 Autoethnography

Autoethnography had surprised me and had been an area I had known nothing about. I had never come across the term before and had assumed that it was a relatively new concept. I remember being surprised when I discovered that its roots lay a full year before I was even born (Hayano, 1979). Despite the general acceptance of the term in literature there have been a multitude of different words to describe similar or loosely similar ideas and its development in an era of postmodernism was due to a belief that knowledge and knowing were multifaceted jewels (Wall, 2006).

For many, autoethnography is a personal challenge but one that allows an individual voice to have an impact on a wider sociological level (Wall, 2008c). Although there are examples of autoethnography across a variety of disciplines including nursing (Foster et al., 2006), social work (Kanuha, 2000) and anthropology (Khosravi, 2007) it was its use in education that intrigued me the most. For some the self reflection of autoethnography was akin to the self-reflection that teachers needed to fulfil their role (Freese, 2006; Hayler, 2010b). For others it was the direct impact that it could have on professional practice and its ability to impact upon social change that gave it credibility (Starr, 2010). I had spent many months pondering why this form that I had been so skeptical of had developed so naturally and had come to the conclusion that it was because it allowed me to reflect upon 'the space between' my teaching and my pupils (Buckle, 2009a). This elusive space that is accessible by reflection leading to personal and professional consequences was what I inadvertently discovered through my research. I had found emancipation in the experimental autoethnography highlighted by the chance discovery of a book by Ellis whilst searching on Amazon (Ellis, 2004), where she described teaching a course on autoethnography to a fictionalised group of students. A large portion of her career had been developing the field of autoethnography and this included writing intimately about her own life including family deaths and an abortion (Ellis, 2009). Her earlier book was one that I simply devoured as it resonated so much with what I felt inside.

However I was aware that there are other opinions on the subject. One of the main arguments was based around the notion of the autoethnography being seen in terms of a cult (Atkinson et al., 2008), a highly subjective term that I felt was unnecessarily

derogatory rather than critically engaging. However this was not a lone voice. During my reading I re-discovered an openly controversial (although brief) response outlining six major criticisms:

1. autoethnography cannot fight familiarity
2. autoethnography is hard to publish ethically
3. autoethnography lacks analysis
4. autoethnography is focused on those in power not the powerless
5. autoethnography removes the need for us to go out and get data
6. 'we' are simply not interesting enough to write about (Delamont, 2007)

Delamont elaborated on this further with a comparison about her research into capoeira and personal moments of crisis; she maintained that her personal crises did not add any new knowledge (Delamont, 2009). Yet I felt that these small moments of crisis were valid; I felt the 'space between' was important (Starr, 2010) and that our experiences of events added to the wider knowledge and that the act of becoming self aware could have an impact on wider societal issues (Yang, 2012). My own self awareness would have an impact on how I managed not only the relationships with pupils in my class but also relationships with staff and those in my out of school life. Becoming self aware and understanding who you are and where you sit in the bigger picture also makes the disparities of how others live more noticeable and calls many to action (Howson, 2011).

I struggled with some of the other arguments raised by Delamont not because they were unanswerable but because I had never intended to defend them. Her concerns about ethics were important, however there was the assumption made that all other forms of research were *easy* to publish ethically. I strongly agreed with Ellis' defence of autoethnographical ethics and her belief that we needed to be accountable for what we wrote and accept that it may hurt others or ourselves; one should approach autoethnographic research with honesty and integrity (Ellis, 2004). Delamont raised a further concern regarding the ethics of those being written about and the ease in which they could be identified in auto-ethnographic writing (Delamont, 2007) and is a concern that Ellis faced in the years after her research into the Fisher Folk (Ellis, 2009). This was therefore one argument of Delamont's that I agreed with which led me to the creation of fictionalised characters in order to prevent this.

Regarding her criticisms on analysis I agreed in part that some of the more emotional auto-ethnographic research I had encountered, such as by Ellis working with a cancer patient (Ellis, 1999), were not open to deep analysis. However I knew that this was not the case for all auto-ethnographical research and that Anderson had comprehensively argued how autoethnography could be analytical; his five key principles were an attempt to encourage those interested in autoethnography to move away from purely evocative writing (Anderson, 2006). The need to strike the right chord was crucial as, "If you are a storyteller rather than a story analyst then your goal becomes therapeutic rather than analytic" (Ellis & Bochner 2000, p.745) and it was this narcissistic element that I had wanted to steer away from in the first place.

I had never faced an open criticism of autoethnography except at my own hands yet I knew that the time would come when I would need to defend my use of it to others. My first thought was the sheer accessibility of a well written piece of auto-ethnographic writing into worlds that have been previously hidden (Boyle and Parry, 2007); it had enabled me to open the door to my classroom and share the voices of excluded young people. Secondly autoethnography had also enabled me to write myself into the research as data allowing a unique perspective to be heard from a researcher situation deeply within the research (Wall, 2008b). This perspective might have been lost if it was not given such prominence. Thirdly writing in an auto-ethnographic style allowed me to link the personal with wider cultural and societal issues (Holt, 2008) which was important to me personally as I had always been conscious of not wanting to write something wooly or narcissistic. It also allowed me to link my own beliefs and values with those of my pupils, their families and the wider education system. Fourthly I felt that choosing to write in an auto-ethnographic style was a personal stand against the long held dominance of more scientific forms (Wall, 2008b); it felt like my own mini revolution partly born out of the growth in self awareness the approach had fostered. Finally I was aware that ethically I was entering into a relationship of trust with whoever read my thesis; I needed their trust to accept that what I said had happened was the case, an issue termed 'authorial honesty' by Sikes (Sikes, 2012).

Chapter 8. Data Collection Part Two

Jan 12	Feb 12	Mar 12	Apr 12	May 12	Jun 12	July 12	Aug 12	Sep 12	Oct 12	Nov 12	Dec 12	Jan 13	Feb 13	Mar 13	Apr 13	May 13	Jun 13

I had carried on through November and December commenting in my journal. My journal was a mixture of memos and reminders to myself, diary entries and doodles. The pupils were used to seeing it on my desk and I had told them that I used it to write my thoughts down as well as making a note of things that I did not want to forget. The pupils each had a classroom 'diary' which was used in a similar way such as recording their news on a Monday morning, as well as being the space where they drew or wrote basic story plans. I had been using it to record my frustration at trying and failing to see a way through the issues I had identified in October:

'Things are mental. I have been worried about getting research done but one of the reasons that it is so hard is because of the level of behaviour in the group' (Journal entry 6.12.12)

The group had becoming increasingly unsettled which was continuing to affect data collection as lessons were frequently disrupted or abandoned. I had tried on four occasions to lead a group activity but I had abandoned the lessons each time due to assaults on staff. Although the kinaesthetic activities had been more successful I had been unable to do any as I did not have the staff available to monitor the rest of the group whilst I worked 1:1 with a pupil. Likewise I had abandoned the use of the camera due to the number of incidents within the classroom where equipment had been thrown. By the end of December I had gathered no new data and I continued to reflect upon ways that I could do things differently and combine them with a more auto-ethnographic approach.

The next day I saw a book in the collection tray with a piece of paper acting as a stand in bookmark. The paper had Liam's name scrawled on it. I assumed Liam had left the book there by mistake so I spoke to him at playtime about putting things away in the right place. He frowned at me over the top of his slightly bent glasses pulling a face of disgust, "It's for you. It's for the tray." I realised I had clearly offended him

and needed to reassure him, "The book is? I'm sorry Liam, I don't understand." He opened the book to the page where the piece of paper was and showed me the picture. It was a drawing of a child with a face bright red from anger and sharp triangular teeth:



Figure 18 - Liam - December 2012

Liam looked at me, the frown imprinted on his face, "It's what I look like when I am angry. The kids used to call me crazy. I get angry loads but I got really angry then like every day. I don't want to look like that. It's scary." I was unsure how to react yet I knew it was an important moment where I needed to respond quickly and in the right way, "Do you want to photocopy it Liam? I can't take the book from the library but we can put a photocopy in the tray." Liam looked at me over the top of his glasses, "Duh. I know that." I walked to the photocopier and gestured for Liam to come as well. Reluctantly he stood up but smiled when he was allowed the chance to press the buttons on the machine. The copy slid out onto the tray and Liam grabbed it eagerly and looked at it. I followed him back into the classroom and he walked over to the tray and put the paper in. "Can I go out to play now?" he said.

I realised I had gone through a defining moment where I had been faced with two choices: I could either have continued to set the agenda by trying to gathering specific pieces of data and followed my head or I could have allowed the pupils to

control what the material was and when it was gathered and followed my heart. My decision to follow my heart was more inline with the way that I worked as a teacher and, in hindsight, it was that call to be 'teacher' more than 'researcher' that had influenced my actions. I realised that teaching was almost a vocational call that entwined ethical considerations and emotive reflection (Schwarz, 1999). My 'duty' was to my class, not my thesis; I had to follow the values that were best for them regardless of the impact upon my research (Buijs, 2005).

For the majority of the previous term I had asked them to complete worksheets or work 1:1 with me with the camera and toys yet this had not been possible due to their behaviour so I had asked less and less of them. I felt that I had reached a turning point in my research and with my relationship with my class as rather than the research being requested and initiated by myself placing myself in the position of power, they were now the ones who controlled the flow of information (Burton et al., 2010). They had been able to opt out of working with me before but this was something entirely different as they were in the position to choose to work with me on their own terms using methods that they selected for themselves and taken responsibility for (Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, 2007). My stepping back from collecting data had created a void that could be filled with their pictures, photos and writing. These, alongside my journal, formed the basis of my new approach to data collection. My journal allowed me to use interpretivism to explore what was happening within the classroom and to understand the uniqueness of events. Through my autoethnographic writing I intended to construct my own understanding of what I had witnessed.

Over the term the pupils had fallen into patterns of their own construction: Liam communicated his views verbally and through photographs; Marcus communicated verbally, through drawings, photographs and through requesting comments to be recorded in my research journal; Cain said little direct verbally but was keen for me to observe and record his play and discussions through my journal and photographs. I felt that we had developed a strong relationship of trust that meant that the pupils felt safe and were prepared to trust me; they had formed a strong attachment (Bowlby, 1980). I stopped any attempt to arrange formal data collection instead relying upon the individual pupils to share what they wanted when they wanted to. I became reliant upon my research journal as the pupils would often ask where it was; Marcus

was always keen to read the parts that were about him and, at times, we would sit with the journal open between us using it as a shared workspace if he decided that was what he wanted to do.

This act of allowing him to share my journal was hugely important in making him a partner in my research and was an indication of the level of trust that we shared in our relationship which was a key research focus (Chapter 6; research question 1). I wanted to allow him to re-engage with past events and have the opportunity to withdraw things that had been written if he so wanted. It also gave us the opportunity to work together in a similar way to the benefits discussed around Participatory Research where we could work together on a shared topic (Wadsworth, 1998). I felt confident working with Marcus like this due to the similarity of it with existing practices at the PRU, such as 1:1 weekly meeting to discuss targets, and although neither Cain or Liam asked to work like this, I would have allowed them to do so if they had wished. Even if I had felt that it was not the method I would have chosen, I believed that I would have needed to honour my decision to allow Marcus to choose his own means of sharing information, for if I had refused then the relationship we had tentatively sculpted may have been in jeopardy.

Clearly I needed to protect the confidentiality of the other pupils and of my own material so I established ground rules from the beginning. Firstly he was never left alone with my journal and care was taken to ensure that he only accessed pages that were about him or blank pages in the book. Fortunately by this stage I was onto my second journal and was able to adapt its use to accommodate Marcus' needs. If this had not been the case then I would have considered using a blank journal solely for recording his data in. Secondly I had been honest with him that the journal was private for him to write in however it was also true that it was private for his friends too. It felt important to treat him with respect yet also balance this by remembering his age and vulnerability (Punch, 2002b). Finally we could only share the workspace when the classroom was calm, settled and there was plenty of staff around. This gave me the freedom to spend the time with him knowing that I was free to monitor his actions rather than being distracted by events around us.

On one occasion Marcus wanted to discuss his family tree and he prompted me to draw it in my journal whilst he observed (18.12.12). Marcus continued to be intrigued

by the journal and would often ask if I could write down conversations that had taken place between the two of us:

'HW - Right. We are going to learn a creation rap to help us remember the order that God made the world.

M - I don't know anything about rats. I know about Saudi Arabia.

HW - Marcus, remember we talked about rap music just now? We are going to do a rap.

M - Arr. Ok. I meant Iraq anyway.' (Journal entry 10.1 13)

When the class were on task Marcus came and asked for the conversation to be recorded in my journal. He then read over what had been written, nodded and returned to his work. It was hard to ascertain what had prompted him to ask to record his words in such a way for his only verbal response was, 'I dunno.' However Marcus was a keen, although poor, reader and was fascinated with reading his own ideas.

Liam was less interested in the journal and was more keen for me to photograph his ideas. He began to ask for photographs to be taken at the end of incidents of aggression he had been involved in:

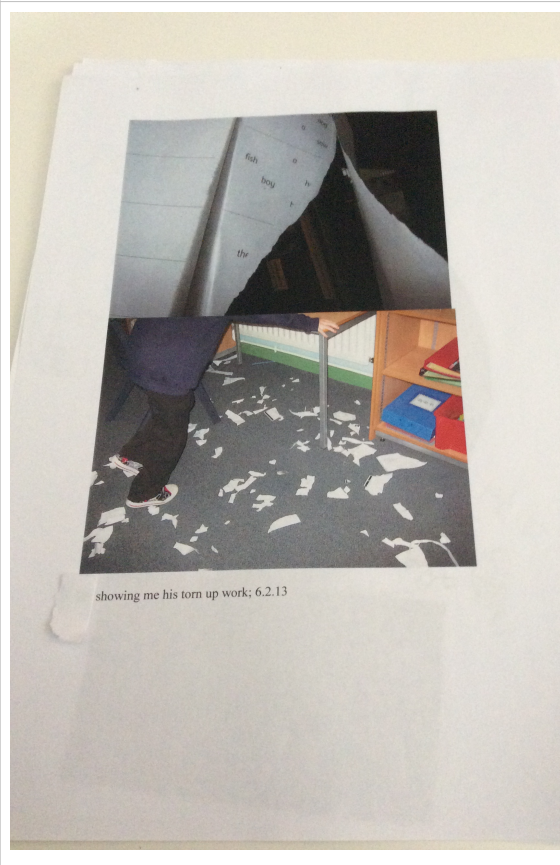


Figure 19 - Photograph requested by Liam
- 6.2.13

Liam did not express a reason for this and was not asked for one. Instead I responded to his requests and photographed anything which he indicated I should. Liam was not an able reader and relied upon visual communication tools in the classroom so it seemed natural that he would have responded well to visual methods rather than written ones.

Cain loved playing with the dolls house, his data largely came from play when he would request photographs to be taken:

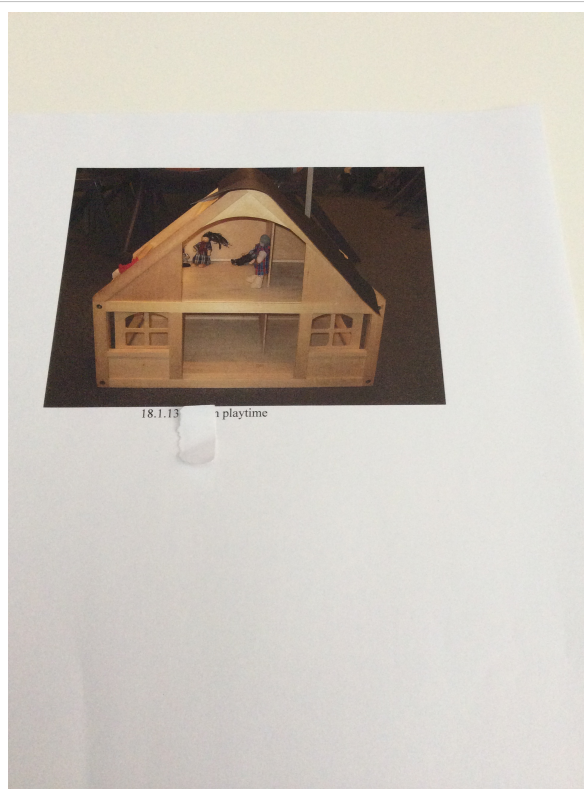


Figure 20 - Photograph requested by Cain - 18.1.13



Figure 21 - Photograph requested by Cain - 5.2.13

He would often accompany this request with a brief explanation of what the scene was:

'The children have been naughty and are not allowed out to play'
(Note left in tray 18.1.13)

'Robbed house' (verbal comment recorded in journal 5.2.13)

Photographing Cain's play allowed me to step back from what was happening and to actively 'listen' to what he had to say without being directly involved (Stephenson, 2009). I was interested in Cain's desire to play with the dolls house and felt that the instability in his home life and subsequent move into Foster Care influenced this. However I never discussed this with him nor encouraged him to play or not play with it: he was free to choose and free to engage me when he wanted.

At times, all three pupils engaged with play activities using Lego. This allowed them to express meaning through non-verbal means (Pimlott-Wilson, 2012) as well as creating opportunities for myself and the pupils to engage in play together (Legoff and Sherman, 2006). Cain, who particularly enjoyed using Lego, would recreate anything from our play that he wanted me to keep by drawing it:



Figure 22 - Photograph requested by Cain - 18.12.12

On occasion it was not the play that pupils wanted to record but instead areas of the school where they enjoyed being. Liam in particular wanted me to know where he liked to be and often requested to use the camera:

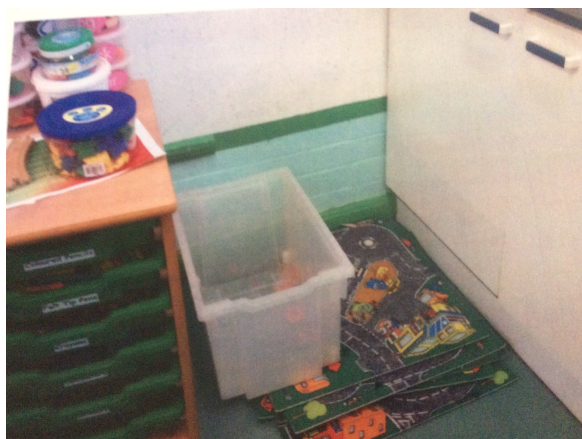


Figure 23 - Photograph taken by Liam - January 2012

I knew from my teaching experience that pupils would say more if there was more to say. If there was not, and they were questioned, they would either create more information on the spot, as needed to comply with the adults' command, or shrug their shoulder and offer a simple 'dunno' as they didn't know what to say as they could be unconscious of the reason for their play activity (Vygotsky, 1967). Neither of these seemed to me to be as authentically their voice as that which they freely chose to give. I decided to never ask the pupils again to give any further details instead taking everything that they said at face value.

There were many positive aspects towards gathering data in this manner. Firstly I felt confident that this pupil led approach gave them greater control over being involved in the research; I never asked them to do anything for me and it was entirely up to them what was recorded and what was not. Secondly I felt that they were communicating in ways that were natural to each individual and not imposed upon them based upon my beliefs as to what would work best; they chose whether to speak, write, use images or play.

However there were negatives to contend with. Firstly I could not plan for when I would receive any data often with weeks in between one piece and the next. Secondly I could not follow up on any interesting findings easily; I had to respect what I was given and could not plan a task that would help me uncover anything deeper. Finally as the pupils were telling me the stories that mattered to them I was less in control of answering my original research questions and had to accept that I would need to wait until the end of the research period before I could look at everything that had been collected and pick out the common threads. One of these themes and a research question was that of my own identity as a teacher and how my understanding of myself developed and influenced my practice (Chapter 6; research question 2). My role as a researcher had changed and I felt that my research identity was fluid rather than clearly defined and separate to my teacher identity (Clegg, 2008). That teacher identity was becoming more unstable as I dealt with the complexities of the school where I worked (Day et al., 2006). However I acknowledged that, from a deconstructionist perspective, identities were often perceived to be unstable and elusive at times (Howard, 2000). I was highly aware of the implications on my research and the impact that such changes may have on my

relativist understanding of 'truth' for the context I was collecting data in was not static but continually developing. This meant that my use of my journal was important for documenting changes within our social space and within my own understanding.

However this spontaneous pupil led data gathering was not set to last as I was about to upset the equilibrium of our classroom.

8.1 Everything changes

For a number of years I had expressed a desire to work in a role outside of the classroom. That spring an internal post arose that meant I would not be in the classroom full time. My time would be split between teaching during the mornings and being the PRU SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) on an afternoon. Whilst I would be based in the same building as my pupils, I would not be working directly with them. The job would start after half term and a cover teacher had been identified, 'Miss Taylor'. In our PSHCE lesson I spoke to the class explaining as much as I was able to about how things would change. We sat in a circle and shared our news and I was able to tell them who their other teacher would be and that they would meet her tomorrow. I explained as clearly as I could what was happening and where I was going to be when I was not with them. Together we thought of some questions we could ask her to find out more about her. I ended the session by reminding them that Miss Taylor and I would work closely together. I was met with a sea of blank faces who showed no extremes of emotion and appeared entirely unconcerned. This presentation was misleading for whatever was happening for them lay deeply hidden. My emotions on leaving the class were intense and on the surface and I was taken by surprise how possessive I felt about Miss Taylor being in the classroom with them for longer than I would be and the experiences I would miss:

'Well. It only hit me tonight that today was my last full day teaching as an official full time teacher. It is quite an emotional feeling really.'

(Journal entry 14.2.13)

The following morning Miss Taylor arrived to be interrogated in the hot seat. She was bombarded with politely asked questions and responded in her softly spoken voice I stood at the back watching and supporting with prompts about behaviour or manners. Miss Taylor was like Roald Dahl's 'Miss Honey' in *Matilda* (Dahl, 2002). She was quiet and calm with a gentle, homely nature. I questioned my own presentation as a teacher:

'I have often felt guilty that I am not a Miss Honey. Part of me wants to be yet it is not in my nature.' (Journal entry 7.1.13)

I was concerned that my relationship with the pupils would change because of the difference between myself and Miss Taylor. If this happened then there was the possibility that my data collection would be affected.

8.2 Viewing the self as important

Having some space from the class had a positive effect upon my ability to reflect upon my identity and role as a teacher (Chapter 6; research question 2). This enforced distance gave me thinking space; although I was even busier than before it was time spent on a different focus and I enjoyed the change. I began to question the way that I acted in the classroom specifically about the language that I used with the pupils. The way I 'talked' as a teacher was so different from my communication with other people I met during the school day yet I noticed that in the classroom I used language assuming that we had a shared understanding of it. I began to perceive how many complicated terms or concepts I used on a daily basis in the classroom: exclusion, reintegration, therapeutic, nurture, reconciliation, panel. The list could go on. Did my class share my understanding? How many different interpretations were present within the group? This led me to question the nature of words themselves, both spoken and written, and how we express ourselves through them:

'How we can express ourselves is crucial for both positive and negative reasons. Yet we use words so freely and because of that we don't have any real respect for their power...The written used to have mystical and

magical feelings to them. The fact that the gospels recall Jesus drawing in the sand shows that this was worth noting.' (Journal entry 23.2.13)

This more reflective writing developed hand in hand with my journals becoming focused more upon my action, feelings and thoughts rather than those of my pupils. Some of my entries became very personal, often touching upon incidents in my past or current struggles with life and faith. The audience of my journals was myself and I spared no thought for who else might one day be privy to their contents. Although writing so personally had seemed natural at the time, I often found myself surprised and more willing to question the relevance of such entries:

'Reading back on yesterday's reflections I am quite surprised by how personal it all is. Is this really something that affects my professional practice?'
(Journal entry 24.2.13)

I felt that I was going deeper into my internal landscape and further away from my class. The physical distance from them had led to a mental distance and I often felt a sense of relief about being away from the intense atmosphere of the classroom. Despite all of these changes my preoccupation was with my new job and I did not give too many thoughts as to how my change in circumstances might affect my research.

8.3 A new post

In the first few weeks after I took up my new post nothing appeared to have changed:

'Regarding life on the shop floor, my relationship with the kids when I am there feels no different. We still have our bizarre conversations. We still go off on tangents.' (Journal entry 11.3.13)

However the number of behaviour incidents, both low level and major, had increased and I felt that the time I spent in the class was largely unproductive:

'So far this is a crazy week. The kids are not coping well with all of the changes. In fact they are chaotic and the behaviour is bad in the mornings and awful in the afternoons.' (Journey entry 14.3.13)

My time with them became a monotonous cycle of regroup, repair and reset. My initial fears that Miss Taylor would steal their hearts away was found to be unjustified as odd little comments were made about how long she was going to be their teacher for and when would I be coming back.

As the weeks progressed the steady flow of their data and requests for photographs began to dry up. I had to accept that I was no longer going to receive anything from the pupils of that ilk again; they had stopped giving me anything and it did not feel right to return to an organised data collection as that moment had passed:

'I cannot escape anymore from the fact that my relationship with the pupils has changed. Since 1/2 term I have not had anything spontaneous given to me by the pupils....the spur of the moment "This is for you" has gone.'

(Journey entry 17.3.13)

The more I looked, the more I saw that our relationship had changed in a variety of subtle ways: I was not picked to join in with playtime games, there were fewer requests to be the one to sit next to them at lunch and I was not routinely asked to tie shoe laces. I had hated tying wet soggy laces but I found myself missing such a simple indicator of our relationship as pupil and teacher. Reflecting upon this classroom relationship had become a central focus of my research (Chapter 6; research question 1) and the change in our relationship felt significant.

During this challenging period the question of my growing desire to write about myself and my personal thoughts continued to dominate my reflections as it felt important and part of my data, yet I was struggling to accept that it was or that it even could be. Then, by chance, I read a quote that changed my perspective entirely:

'Education takes place when there are two learners [teacher and student] who occupy somewhat different spaces in ongoing dialogue.' (Aronowitz, 2001, p. 64)

I realised that this could also be true of educational research of a more auto-ethnographic nature for the lives of the learners (researcher and student) and their dialogue is naturally affected by who they are, the relationships they have and the culture they are in (Starr, 2010). I had always understood how the pupil's data was impacted by who they were so the leap to bringing myself into the research and understanding that who I was equally affected outcomes was not that huge a step to take, yet this was clearly a move towards a more constructivist position I knew that I had to take this new perspective to Erica and Dawn so I arranged a meeting.

8.4 Leaving the blood in

The time had come, "I want to leave the blood in (Moriarty, 2013) to let my research data reflect the difficulties and challenges I have encountered and not just a succinct summary. I am a lot of my own data. My thoughts, my journal entries, those are the research findings and as valid in trying to understand how young pupils perceive exclusion as my gathered comments and pieces of work from them. I would not have wanted to interpret their work (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996) but instead wanted to present it as it was, as unheard voices in a national, local and individual school system. Yet my data, my lived experience, is the frame that pupil's data hangs off; a skeleton. I am taking a stronger socially constructivist stance in that it is the interaction with my pupils, our relationships, that is driving how my knowledge of them is built. My own understanding of my identity has become increasingly important over the course of my research (Chapter 6; research question 2)."

Erica spoke first, "Ok, I see your enthusiasm. But what is the basis of making such a claim? How can you ground it academically?" Rearranging my cup on the table I spoke, "I started writing the journal as a simple record of what was going on practically. But it became a place where I engaged with my emotions and topics that were seemingly off topic. At first I wondered what relevance it had on the views of excluded pupils but it just seemed right." Dawn looked intrigued, "Can you give us an example of what you mean? I would like to try and understand where you are coming from." I flicked through my battered journal, "Here, here you go. This only

happened last week. Four pages of me discussing church, faith, beliefs. I'll read you some:

'I believe that truth can be contained within a story. That truth is multifaceted. That there is no single truth nor a single reality but a plurality of both. I could find what I crave in faiths around the world anywhere. But what I miss is the familiarity of language I meet in church; the sound of the words that fall over my ears with the thees and thous, lests and yeas. The music. The poetry of the hymns even if (as is the case) the poetry is poor they are still loved. The smells, the sights. The sensual bombardment of what I know. Of the familiar.'

(Journey entry 2.4.13)

You see, who I am affects this research. My wider beliefs and way of viewing the world was the starting point for wanting to do the research in the first place. I was adamant that I would not write a piece of research like this. I thought ethnography was fluffy, woolly, self-centred. Yet my journals moved from simply being a running record of what I did when, to being a space to link myself with the research on a deeper level. An article by Conle (Conle, 2000) made me see that my journals were data and rich data at that. I look back and see how my understanding of myself fed into my data gathering and took my research in a whole new direction."

Erica spoke , "So you feel that the auto-ethnographic nature of your research, the personal comments and musings, is data as valid as the pupil's photos or conversations? What academic precedence is there for this? Who has influenced you? Why the change from being against such data to accepting it?" I felt on safe territory, "I read a book. A book that changed my perspectives and made me see the validity of such an approach. I found the book by chance, 'The Ethnographic I' by Ellis (Ellis, 2004). Ellis talks of ethnography choosing you rather than you choosing it and that resonated with me. After reading that I found a book by another Ed.D student based around his experiences as a classroom practitioner now working in initial teacher education (Hayler, 2010a). He proposed a view of research that started with the individual but moved beyond this to look at a wider cultural issue. He used a progressive/regressive model to interpret data both forwards and backwards therefore being able to move from a micro to a macro perspective and vice versa

within the same piece of research. If I transfer these concepts to my own research I have moved to reflecting on my own situation before taking a broader view and looking at the exclusion of the pupils I teach and the wider culture of exclusion itself. I also look backwards at my own life and then apply this to the present and a possible future."

Dawn looked at me straight in the eye and posed the question I had been expecting, "So just what data have you generated? Are there recurring themes?" I nodded, 'I have journals full of information which I am typing up. I am also gathering a bank of photos and paper based material from the pupils involved which I aim to reflect upon once the data collection has finished. I am not going to end up with reams of tangible material but I don't feel that I am aiming for that anymore. What I want to have at the end of the data collection is material that will enable me to form a clear picture of what my relationship with my class is like and to be able to make observations as to why this is the case. The thought of creating a tool kit for professionals is long gone. I found that I simply could not generalise from the data I had collected to make any conclusions that I could share. Added to that the research became about the pupil's and my own stories. The methodology I started with simply did not match the setting and pupils I was working with. With the pupils fully determining what data is being collected I am confident that my prior assumptions and beliefs are not structuring data collection. Therefore my interpretivist stance of wanting to explore the pupil's perceptions and beliefs is upheld and then shared through my auto-ethnographic writing. "

Chapter 9. Three Personal Stories

Jan 12	Feb 12	Mar 12	Apr 12	May 12	Jun 12	July 12	Aug 12	Sep 12	Oct 12	Nov 12	Dec 12	Jan 13	Feb 13	Mar 13	Apr 13	May 13	Jun 13

My research questions had developed to be focused on relationships, teacher knowledge of pupils and sharing sensitive information see chapters 5 and 6). I wanted to reflect upon these concerns in my personal life.

9.1 Mrs Cook v Mr Thomas - pupil and teacher relationships

My reflection upon my own role in the classroom led me to reflect upon what my teaching role meant to me and how I conceptualised it as part of wider society (Søreide, 2006). I knew that I had often found great satisfaction in teaching and these occasions were when I was in a positive working environment built upon professionalism, respect and a shared ethos (Chong and Low, 2008). I felt there was value in studying my own professional life, including my motivations for entering the profession, as part of a wider understanding of the role (Goodson, 1991; Goodson and Numan, 2002). Although some have criticised the teaching profession for being institutionalised and lacking the drive to work in a different environment with teachers having seamlessly moved from student to being at the front of the class (Fuller and Bown, 1975), I had felt that it was more of a vocation (J, 2005).

When I looked back at my own past, and the teachers that I could recall, I had mixed feelings. Yet I felt that these experiences had led me to develop a belief system for how I felt that I should be as a teacher (Pajares, 1992; Mitchell and Weber, 2003). This belief system was based upon having a genuine relationship between teacher and pupil and using an interpretive approach to explore the context of the relationship. The importance of personal progress, where success is measured by the impact upon an individual as opposed to a nationwide standard, and the importance of a broad education system formed part of my social constructivist understanding of how knowledge is generated. Trying to select those teachers who had the most influence upon me was hard as I felt that, in most cases, the effect that

they have had upon me was more like a slow gathering of influences rather than dramatic episodes. However in the summer term of Year 4 one dramatic event did occur that affected me greatly: I changed schools. It was not a natural move for it neither happened at the end of an academic year nor due to a house move. Instead it was a mid term move due to my parents dissatisfaction with the school I had been at since I was an infant; a school that slowly chipped away at my spirit until I was a shadow of the child I had previously been.

The school was not a primary school but an infant and juniors. Both buildings were large and the school was built in the 1960s with large windows and shiny wooden floors. The catchment area was predominantly white and catered for a rambling estate of the same age as the school with a mixture of private and council housing. The infant building was single story with two different wings flowing off a central hall. The juniors was again based around a central hall with a single story wing containing the lower juniors and a second two storey building housing the upper juniors and offices. I had joined the infants in Year 2 and had loved my teachers. Moving to the juniors I had been taught by a crazily dressed, and rather over the top, teacher who dressed in a riot of colours and drove a blue Fiat Panda which appeared to be rather small for her tall frame. I loved school. Yet all of his positivity vanished when I moved around the L shaped bend in the corridor into the darkness of Year 4.

Mrs Cook was my new teacher's name. She was an older lady who was a handful of years away from retirement, stout and matronly with grey short hair swept back into dramatic curls. She wore pleated dresses with a small black belt often in bold colours like royal blue or British racing green. At times my memory of how she looked, and even acted, gets confused with that of my maternal grandmother who died around this time. They shared a dress sense and outlook in common. Mrs Cook was an indomitable force who was to be feared and respected rather than loved and her aim seemed to be to control and dominate: a Mrs Trunchbull and definitely not a Miss Honey (Dahl, 2002). Very early on in the year I had felt her wrath over my spellings. I had always struggled with spellings and tables although I had never felt that my lack of ability was a cause for concern. Yet in that autumn term I was faced with two words that became my nemesis: 'rabbit' and 'tractor'. Mrs Cook progressed from leaving angry messages in a red pen marching like an angry army across my page to shouting verbal messages across the classroom like a sergeant major.

Mrs Cook terrorised the whole class yet I felt that a special form of malice was reserved for me. One would assume that the maternal figure of a woman would be the least likely to act in such a way but research appeared to indicate the opposite with the majority of research pointing to female teachers as being emotionally abusive (Shumba, 2002), although emotional abuse was recorded for teachers of both sexes (Theoklitou et al., 2012). When James stole my shoes and hid them after PE I was branded a liar for denying any part in their disappearance. I walked up and down the parquet floor in my knee high socks crying unable to make sense of the rabbit hole I had found myself in. Hidden in a white PE crate at the back of the storage area I found my shoes. By this time it was the end of the school day so I slipped my shoes on and traipsed miserably down the path connecting the two schools to where my lift was waiting. I can recall feeling dejected as I had never experienced being disliked before and I could not rationalise why it was so. Of course I had fallen out with friends and had disagreements with family but they were short lived and did not last long in the memory. Yet this was different as I was a powerless child and Mrs Cook held all the cards. Due to a childhood illness I was small for my age and had been brought up to act confidently and trust in my own abilities. Not being used to being in such a scenario I tried the only tactic I knew which was to try and be liked; to befriend her and make her see who I really was rather than the misconceptions she clearly held of me. By nature I was a diplomat and naturally tried to forge a middle path that would lead to peace if not reconciliation.

I had received a leather bound copy of *The Railway Children* by E. Nesbit (Nesbit, 1960) for Christmas and had taken it into school to be our class reader as a means of gaining favour with her. I wanted her to be thankful, to notice that I was entrusting her with this very special gift because I respected her. It did not work. The class sat enthralled with her dramatic reading style yet I gained no truce. I will never know why she disliked me so much but for some reason she did. Maybe I was an easy victim; maybe I reminded her of someone else (see my discussion in chapter 4). Even as an adult these feelings of helplessness and worthlessness lingered as Mrs Cook created room for doubt to creep in to my childish world. My parents refused to let me stay any longer yet even on my last day Mrs Cook continued to exert her power as she refused to let me say goodbye to my friends instead requesting that I empty my tray in silence and wait in reception to be collected. Watching my mother

arrive through the double glass doors was pure salvation. I left the school with nothing other than memories and hurt. Yet it was this fear of becoming like her that made me so concerned that I was not soft and gentle like Mrs Taylor; I would have been mortified to have made any of my class ever feel so worthless. Whilst I recognise that my experience was not unique (Mead, 1992), I felt that it impacted on my desire build positive relationships with my pupils with honest and open communication.

After half term I arrived at my new school, an infant and juniors surrounded by an open green space. The school had a link with the local RAF base so there was a constant turn over of children from the furthest side of the globe. Some children stayed for a term, others for a few years. The hall was draped in flags from every nation a pupil had come from. My ears rang with the sounds of many nationalities and my eyes were bombarded with a full palate of humanity.

The classroom which I found myself in was radically at odds from the one I had left. I arrived mid way through a term and therefore midway through a topic. My new class were embarking on a project to recreate the Bayeux Tapestry on the walls of the classroom. I was greeted by Mr Thomas, a young moustached teacher who always smelt faintly of coffee. He turned out to be my biggest inspiration and the time I spent in his class, both in Year 4 and then Year 5, was a wonderful experience. My writing from my previous school had been printed and only in pencil but now I had fallen into a world of fountain pens and cursive writing. Mr Thomas quickly realised the problem and spent time working with me to perfect my joins. Presentation of my handwriting was never my strong point but he was able to see beyond that to the content of what I was saying. He fostered a true love of learning and many of the experiences that come to mind when I think about my school years are those spent with him.

Mr Thomas ran the school Euro Club which met on a Thursday lunchtime. This side of Mr Thomas shone through time and time again; he was fun and he inspired children to see learning as fun. I wished I could tell him what an inspiration he was to me and how he gave me so much hope and confidence in the world; Mr Thomas was the personification of Miss Honey.

So what were the differences between these two characters? Mr Thomas was the only male teacher I had experienced so I accept that this novelty is a factor in why he sticks in my mind yet I never perceived that he was viewed differently or acted differently because of this as other male teachers have discussed (Sargent, 2000). Instead he demonstrated care and nurturing that was seriously lacking in Mrs Cook. He was a real person. Our whole class was aware that he was married and had a young child; we knew he wanted to travel more and had an interest in European history. Mrs Cook was an enigma and who she was alluded me. Both of these teachers have direct links with the story of my teaching life especially working with pupils who have been excluded: I too have felt how oppressive and dominating a pupil/teacher relationship can be; I know what it is like to be helpless in a system that focuses on the many and not the individual; I have been the class scapegoat and the innocent victim. Mrs Cook taught me the power that teachers can have and how easily it can be abused (Ingersoll, 1996; Shumba, 2007). From her I realised that it is possible to damage a child quickly and leave lasting scars and memories. She has enabled me to experience what so many of the children in the PRU experience: the break down of a relationship where you are the one with limited power. What Mr Thomas taught me is more obvious but no less important. He showed me the power that building a relationship can bring. I learnt that learning is not solely about what happens in the classroom; that learning is a wider, broader and exciting. My memories of both teachers were vivid and encompassed physical memories, memories of being cared for and those of experiencing the power that teachers can have over their classes (Uitto and Syrjälä, 2008) yet the memories of Mr Thomas were largely positive.

Having spent some time thinking about the past my mind wandered and I began to think about my time in Year 5 in greater depth. I sat at work watching my old class with their new teacher; seeing their interactions, both positive and negative, watching their relationships play out in front of me. I had often thought about meeting my pupils in the future and seeing who they had become having known who they were before. Yet thinking about the past, about Mr Thomas, made me wonder who he thought I would become based upon his relationship with me over 20 years ago. What impression did I give him? How did he view me and interpret my behaviour? How did he view our relationship? To put myself in the position I put my pupils; to be watched and interpreted as I have watched and interpreted them. Not every child I

recall are the ones that I liked yet neither are they the ones who caused me the most concern. There is no method and formula; it is not an exact science. Instead it seems that some relationships just appear to stand out.

I sat at school one night when the pupils had left and the building was empty except for myself and Brian, I decided to Google Mr Thomas' name. Realising that I had no idea if he had stayed a teacher, become an academic or left the profession entirely it seemed futile looking at websites. Instead I switched on to Google images. It seemed hopeless. I was looking for a man I had last seen in July 1991 aged 11; I was now 33. Brian stuck his head around the door, "Coffee? What you up to?" I sighed, "Needles and proverbial haystacks. I'm looking for my primary school teacher." He raised a thumb and left the room. I turned back to the screen and began scrolling through the images. One image stood out and I clicked on the picture and was taken to the website of a charity that supported underachieving children in my old home town. The charity had a website and an email address and I tentatively wrote a brief message:

FAO Mr Thomas,

I hope you don't mind me emailing. You were my Year 4 and 5 teacher at Horse Hill Primary School. I am writing a thesis about young children's perspectives of exclusion. I have been thinking a lot about my time at Horse Hill and I would like to discuss your memories of that time with you. I look forward to hearing from you soon,

Helen Woodley

I clicked send and sat back in my chair exhaling loudly. Brian appeared with a coffee, "Any luck?" I nodded, "Yes, I think so. I have just sent an email to him. Well, I hope it is him otherwise someone's got a pretty weird message!"

The following week a polite email appeared in my inbox confirming his identity and giving me a phone number. That evening I plucked up the courage to call and the voice I heard took me back decades; I felt tears forming in my eyes as he indicated that he knew exactly who I was. The following month I arrived at a strange pub

clutching a handful of photos. Making my way to an empty table I sat nervously waiting feeling both excited and apprehensive. As time ticked by doubts began to form in my mind: what if he was not how I remembered him? What if I found myself disliking him? As I stared out the window I heard a gentle voice, "Hello Helen Woodley". I turned to meet an older yet recognisable face. Shaking hands, our initial conversation was formal discussing the politics of education and Government ideals. Yet it was not long until our conversation became more familiar, "You always nagged me about my handwriting." He smiled, "I know. You needed it, it was terrible. There are only two reasons to write: for yourself or for others. If it is for others then it needs to be accessible." I was all too aware of the link between his comment and the nature of my research for I was wanting to share a journey of self exploration and teacher identity as well as having to demonstrate academic rigour.

Mr Thomas began to tell me the story of his own background in order to explain how his own educational philosophy developed. He told me of his transfer to secondary school when the grammar school he was expecting to join merged with a local comprehensive. A lot of teachers had been put off by the thought of teaching such a mix of pupils but the head had successfully recruited many young teachers straight out of college. As he journeyed through school the same recruitment policy continued and by the time he was taking his exams he realised that his German teacher was only a few years older than he was. This man proved to be a lasting influence on his career. His teacher tried to make learning relevant and personal, encouraging the pupils to take responsibility for their own progress. He mastered the art of informal formality where the classroom was relaxed yet his word was respected. His main concern was building a relationship of trust and mutual respect out of the belief that this would aid the pupils in progressing.

Several years later and nearing the end of his teacher training course, Mr Thomas was looking for a job. In his pigeon hole he discovered a note from his old German teacher, now a head, offering him a post as a secondary languages teacher. In a time of economic problems and teacher unemployment he jumped at the opportunity. It gave him the chance to thank his old teacher and to develop his teaching philosophy along similar lines. Move forward ten years and Mr Thomas finds himself teaching his first class of primary pupils confident in his own ability to build successful

relationships having seen the impact upon his own development and that of his past pupils. This is the class I enter, stage left.

Our conversation continued and I shared photos from my time in his class including ones from our week in the Peak District. Before we parted I asked him what his lasting memory of me was, "You were a bright and bubbly girl. I felt that your arrival opened a pressure valve in you but it is not until you told me of Mrs Cook today that I understood why that was." Driving home I realised that he was my teaching 'father' and his beloved German teacher was my 'grandfather'. This 'family' of influences based upon relationships and built layer upon layer, helped to form the teacher I became.

Mr Thomas' positive influence and Mrs Cook's negative had relationship at the heart. Yet what they ultimately showed was the importance of understanding the lived context and being able to take an interpretive look at how that impacted upon my identity as an individual. How I acted and thought in those two varying settings was entirely dependent upon the context; one situation shaped me to be subservient and powerless whilst the other encouraged me to be more individualistic and free. An outsider viewing me as a child in those varying contexts would come to a plurality of truths depending upon which 'me' they viewed. The relativism of each setting impacted upon the 'truth' or 'truths' I showed.

9.2 Nanny - the importance of personal story and identity

In a half term week I spent the day with a nonagenarian. The whole of our conversation was based around stories of the recent, and not so recent, past. Although the context was the past, the content was very much geared towards the future; the relevance of each story was only to be found by what they indicated about what might be. My grandmother had recently returned home after several months in hospital. She had fallen, rather dramatically, through a glass door and then required extensive physiotherapy. At the time of our conversation she was awaiting her daily visit from the social services team to prepare her lunchtime meal. For the preceding hour we had chatted starting with a discussion about how she felt at the moment and then slowly sinking back in time to past events. This was not the slippage of a mind

ravaged by disease but the act of witnessing a person try and make sense of their present and describe their wishes for the future based upon their experiences in the past. Having known me for over 30 years, the conversation flowed easily and was honest and open.

One story she raised was about how her father had sat in his armchair every day including dragging it to the table to eat his supper. There were other chairs available in the house yet his armchair was his armchair and herself and her sister would never have sat in it when he was present. So powerful was the chair that they dared each other to sit in it almost fearing the wrath of their non-conformist god. She described her father as being a kindly, patient man where as her mother was more controlling and sharper. He had worked on the railway initially in his Welsh homeland. Although he had grown up familiar with the language it was not spoken in the Home Counties where the old woman had grown up. Yet the soft lilt of his sing-song accent must have added to the impression of gentility and peace. As she told this story she was sat in the armchair that had been her husband's which, on his death some 15 years earlier, she had taken over. She sat in it like a monarch who had ascended to the throne reluctantly yet resigned to do her duty. The chair had been there for some 40 years barely moving an inch. It had been reupholstered on several occasions completely reinventing itself for each passing decade. I pondered what had prompted her to tell this story of her father as it had not naturally flowed from the previous conversation. The meaning of the story appeared to be less about her father and his chair lost to the echoes of time and more about herself and the physically real chair she was sat in; the object had prompted her to talk (Cram and Paton, 1993). She appeared to be expressing her desire to do the same as her father (and her husband) had done: to sit in her armchair. So why tell the story? What relevance to the future did the historic and present act of sitting in a chair have? Placing the story, both told and acted, in the wider context helped to make some sense. In the background there had been discussions over possible moves into a care home and this story appeared to contain her opinion on such a topic: I am going to stay in my house in my chair. The chair was clearly an important symbolic object for her both historically and in the present and it therefore made sense that it would appear in her narrative. It would be interesting to see if this image reappeared in subsequent conversations or if the chair moved with her if she did ended up

leaving her house. The linking of the ephemeral (stories) and the tangible (symbolic objects) was important in self expression (O'Connor and Macfarlane, 2002).

A second story the lady told was about her hairdresser who had visited the house earlier in the morning for her weekly appointment. She discussed knowing the hairdresser as a young child as she had watched her grow up in the house over the road. For many years the woman had worked in the parade of shops further up the street. During the recession the shop had closed and many of the Marcel Wave generation had been at a loss as to who would be able to meet their specific and highly unfashionable needs. So this ex employee had set up her own business to visit the elderly and provide the service they were desperately in need of. The hairdresser, in her late 40s, had a three syllable name which she had shortened to a one syllable nickname that was printed proudly on her business cards. However the nonagenarian had never, and would never, use the shortened form. No, her full name was the only one possible. As I listened I smiled to myself as I knew that she herself used a shortened form of her own name as had her husband. However was this really a story about the hairdresser or herself? Placing the story within the wider context proved to be illuminating. What could have been understood as a lady of an older generation being stubborn, could be interpreted in a very different light as being about the need for receiving the respect due to each individual. This lady was faced with twice daily care visits from a variety of different people. They had the power to access her home and be in her personal and intimate space. Therefore she wanted to have some control and authority over the situation and one way in which she could achieve this was to demand a basic level of respect from these strangers. I noticed, when the lunchtime help arrived, that she was addressed by her full name with no attempt to refer to her by a pet name or diminutive. Our names mean a lot to us, we remember the day that someone else had our name. The combination of names and personal stories help form our character (Israel, 2014).

Nanny's story highlights how social constructivism is used by individuals not only to construct new knowledge but how we continually form and build understandings based upon our social interactions.

9.3 Change - the story of professional upheaval

Towards the end of my research, my working world had a violent shift which impacted upon both my personal and professional life challenging my self-belief in teaching and making room for doubt and fear. I had been open with my supervisors about the forced restructuring of the PRU by the local authority and the change in vision and ethos. However, as my research and writing began to draw to a close, I felt the need to be as open as possible about how my pupils and myself had been impacted by decisions made beyond our classroom door and far beyond our control.

Dear you two,

It's been some years now since we first met and I embarked upon this journey of discovery. So much has changed within myself I know. Yet this is not the purpose of this email. I know we have talked on and off over the years about how much my work has changed, but it seems important to explain it all in full.

Nationally, education has been in a time of great change since the Coalition Government came into power in 2010. Although this was prior to my research starting, it took time for policies and changes to trickle down and their effects to be felt. The passing of the Academies Act (Parliament, 2010) changed the number of young people that were excluded and made their return to mainstream education more of a challenge for it gave Academies greater freedom in admitting pupils onto their roll. In reality an Academy does not have to accept a pupil who has been permanently excluded. So a young person looking for a new school is completely disadvantaged if their next nearest school is an Academy. What if the next is? And the one after that?

In relation to PRUs in particular, the Coalition moved them away from being centrally maintained, giving their Management Committees control over their budgets and staffing²¹. Whilst I am certain that for some PRUs

²¹ https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Documentary_analysis_Education_policy_since_2010.pdf

this was welcomed, within my setting it coincided with the decision to completely restructure our provision. This was not a change that we, as teachers, were involved in nor consulted about.

This restructuring has taken place alongside other educational reforms including the role of OfSTED in judging PRUs²² so that we are judged in the same manner as mainstream providers much to the frustration of those who work in them²³. None of these processes have been quick and the cultural change in my setting has been riddled with personal and professional challenges. I believe institutional change needs to be carefully managed and strategically planned (Johnson, 1992). I am aware that schools could be deemed to be loosely coupled and liable to being stagnant (Fullan, 2010) and that we could have been deemed a 'cruising' school although I often felt that we are now 'sinking' (Stoll and Fink, 1996). Yet the manner in which change happened for us was top down which continues to leave me with no sense of being a partner, of having my voice heard or my professional identity taken seriously. It is an organisation in slow motion chaos yet none of us have noticed we are probably beyond the point of no return. We are staring into our own event horizon whilst marking books and mounting displays.

It has been over four years of uncertainty and upheaval. I have cried. I have mourned and grieved for what was and what could have been. I have seen colleagues, friends, stumble and fall. I have heard the doleful sounds of black dogs howling and barking to alert us all to their sinister presence. Amidst all of this I have tried, and often failed, to care for the tiny humans in my classroom; to try and be as much of the teacher I knew I was as has been possible. We were expected to carry on as normal; how we did I will never know but I suppose you just cope. Every day brought fresh fears. Over time these moved to weekly then to monthly yet I am still left with a sense of panic when I open my work email or answer the phone in the office and do not recognise the name of the person on the

²² <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/AP%20consultationDocument%20V6.doc>

²³ <http://www.musttryharder.net/2013/08/analysing-progress-in-a-pupil-referral-unit/>

other end of the line. I am skeptical of people's motives and tend to proceed with caution when I am dealing with others in the local authority never quite knowing who to trust. These four years have scarred me. I am a passionate teacher who does not know if she wants to teach any more. I am cynical and jaded. I have been teaching for 12 years; I have around 25 years left. I do not know if I can be in the profession for that long yet am devastated at the thought of leaving something that I love doing. I have lost faith in the benefits that these reforms are meant to bring (Van Veen et al., 2005).

Emotions aside, the impact upon my classroom practice has been immense with the need for pupils to be making progress regardless of their social and emotional needs an example of how the ground has shifted. At the end of that first data collection, all those months and words ago, I came to understand that it was my ability to be myself within the classroom and to work within the professional freedom that I did, was what made my class successful - the space between (Buckle, 2009a). My teaching practice, although monitored as any other teachers, was built upon trust and professionalism. Gradually things changed. When you are continually presented with change; when uncertainty and doubt creep into your mind; when your trusted classroom practice becomes scrutinised and you are forced to attend training in areas you know you excel at; when you wake up in a classroom that looks the same but feels totally different. This is when you know that Government policy has reached even your safe space. 'You hear that Mr Anderson? That is the sound of inevitability.....'.²⁴

And so it continues. As I write we are being rebranded and restyled. We are awaiting new logos, new premises, new leadership and a new vision. I wish I could say the future was bright but I seem to have sunglasses on. Excuse my cynicism. I still love my job and the successes in getting the pupils the support they need is brilliant. This is what keeps me going. The day I lose being there for the pupils is the day I ought to quit the job.

²⁴ The Matrix, 1999

I believe that my research has made a difference in the way that I have coped with the changes. I appreciate that, if I had just been a teacher, I would have had different thoughts and feelings as I saw and heard them from colleagues like Brian. However the researcher identity has meant that I have been able to take a much broader view than I ever had before, beyond my classroom or even educational politics, to a position where my self is in relationship to a much wider system (H. J. M. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 2010). This has enabled me to take a more philosophical view of the importance of social and symbolic boundaries and how individuals respond to inequality and change (Molnár, 2002).

That is enough from me. I hope it puts things into some perspective.
Hope you are well,

H

Chapter 10. The Pupils' Stories

Jan 12	Feb 12	Mar 12	Apr 12	May 12	Jun 12	July 12	Aug 12	Sep 12	Oct 12	Nov 12	Dec 12	Jan 13	Feb 13	Mar 13	Apr 13	May 13	Jun 13

The following stories are fictionalised narratives as used by Clough (Clough, 2002). They aim to show both the *truth* of what they said and are also *untrue* and aim to be between the 'what is' and 'what if' that Reed discusses (Reed, 2011). Within this framework Reed envisages the relationship between writer and reader as being crucial in communicating an experience. These stories are my communication of and reflection about the pupils within my classroom and are, as Wallace states a means of gaining empathy (for their permanent exclusion) and discussion of professional practice (my experiences of them within the classroom) that is shared with a wider audience (Wallace, 2010). The stories were developed from the data collected during the first and second cycles which was used to form a visual summary sheet for each pupil (Appendix 4). The stories generated from the data collected and the use of fictionalised narratives (Clough, 2002) are a way of bridging the gap between academia and pupils as raised by Beazley (Harriot Beazley, 2009) as discussed in Chapter 3. The stories are also a way of sharing ethically sensitive information and data (Chapter 4) which had become a key research question (Chapter 6; research question 3).

10.1 The story of Liam aged 8

On a rainy morning many years ago, a teacher drove to Harland to collect a boy and his mother for an admission meeting. Accompanying his brother on the long journey was a small blonde toddler with thick lenses in his grubby glasses called Liam. The journey, mainly on twisting country lanes, had clearly been traumatic for the small child as he eventually vomited over himself and the car. During the long meeting, this tiny child had run wild opening every draw and hastily moving from toy to toy. For many years Liam's relationship with the PRU remained as a mere memory of this event often told and retold as part of the wider school narrative. I had not worked at the PRU during this time yet this story had become part of my own repertoire.

One day the paper work arrived for short placement bearing Liam's name. The story of the car came to the front of people's minds. The day for his own admission meeting was booked for a bright autumn day. The class Liam was due to join was small, only four boys, and an oasis of calm. Whilst waiting for his arrival I sat and played games with my class, "We will have a new starter next week, he's called Liam and he's in year 3" I told them. They appeared unbothered by this news, they had seen new boys arrive before, how hard could it be?

As the sound of the bell I opened the door to be greeted by a sullen boy with untidy hair and poorly fitting clothes. His face was pale and he wore a look of complete dissatisfaction with the world. This was Liam. Snippets of information were quietly whispered by his teacher as the family were given the tour: "Mum has separated from the boy's dad. He isn't allowed to see the boys and she isn't allowed to see him." His six weeks at the PRU were a blur of hyperactivity and toddler tantrums; his temporary class hated him. Liam was never able to accept his part in any confrontation. Instead he would simply snigger then frown angrily at whoever dared accuse him. After six week's intensive support, he left an almost carbon copy of the child who had arrived. He was forgotten again and returned to being a blonde vomiting toddler.

It came as no surprise the following summer when his name appeared on the list of permanent exclusions. A meeting was hastily arranged for the following day with Liam arriving in a state of extreme agitation. His clothes hung off his slender frame, his fingernails were caked with dirt and his glasses were filthy. Unusually his teacher accompanied his mother as, in the case of most permanently excluded children, the role of the excluding school had by now ended. The teacher asked for a quiet word whilst the formal paperwork was signed by Liam's mother. She spoke without prompting, "Things have really deteriorated at home." I nodded whilst wondering how they could exclude him knowing all of what she was about to tell me, "Liam's seen an awful lot of bad stuff recently. We've been really worried about him, how he looks and how angry he is. But we have a whole school of others to think about. We can't do any more." I tried to sympathise but all I saw was a damaged boy and an equally damaged mother. It seemed that the Utilitarian notion of the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people was alive and kicking (Bentham, 1994). After they all left, I looked at his paperwork. The earliest incidents were from his time in nursery and he had recently started taking Ritalin. His academic levels were

below age expectations yet despite his learning, behavioural and emotional needs he had not been referred to an educational psychologist nor had a request for Statutory Assessment even been discussed. One name appeared 44 times in his paperwork, Marcus. They did not seem like they were a good combination so maybe Liam would benefit from the distance. Marcus was permanently excluded the following week.

Liam was a challenging boy and on numerous occasions over the first few weeks he was explosive. At these times he would physically attack his peers, self harm and verbally abuse staff. It was of little surprise when, on the last day of term, his Social Worker called to say he was going to live with his maternal grandfather. Liam was now a Looked After Child. It was not until early September that we met granddad when he brought Liam back for the first day of school. Liam looked like a new child. His hair was smartly cut and his school jumper smelt of an odd mixture of aftershave and laundry powder. His face was tanned and his glasses spotless.

This return did not remain perfect. Although in a more stable environment, Liam remained an angry and frustrated boy. He frequently asked to return to Harland not grasping that he was never allowed to return. Liam's learning needs added to this complexity as he struggled with abstract thinking. For him the solution was simple: he had been in trouble at school (as he had done so many times before), he had been sent home and should now be allowed to return (as he had been so many times before). As far as he was concerned his behaviour on that last day was no different to how it had been previously so why was the outcome so different? Liam was a challenging pupil to deal with largely due to his unpredictability. He flitted between moods at a seemingly endless rate leaving everyone trying to catch up with him. Lessons were frequently interrupted as Liam fell out with peers, fell out with staff or simply found greater joy in doing something other than what he was asked. At times he could be a loving and caring soul yet he could not sustain it. Whatever Liam was feeling he showed, there was no pretence or attempt to hide his emotions. He was always brutally honest.

Liam was intrigued by my research and was very forward about wanting to know what it was about or sharing his opinion on what had been collected. With the first data collection he handed in 5 written pieces of work, 4 photos of places in school he liked and 2 photos using Fisher Price figures. Although he greatly disliked writing and struggled with it he was determined to complete tasks so that he could hand

them in. Liam expressed how much he had disliked his excluding school and how he perceived that their view of him was at odds with how other people saw him. He was open about his failings; he knew that he could be hurtful towards people and that he could be challenging. Yet he didn't see this as a reason to not like him, it was just Liam being Liam. His time at his excluding school had clearly been challenging for him and he felt more accepted and valued at the PRU. There was a genuine sense from him that he felt that he had been let down by the staff; they knew about his home life and issues yet in spite of that they still didn't want him. At the PRU Liam clearly felt wanted. Liam was not a demonstrative child at school, wearing his emotions openly was not the same as physically expressing and he reserved that for home. He was very affectionate with his grandfather who had created a stable and nurturing environment to counter all of the upheaval he had experienced before. This gave Liam a degree of confidence in himself and I often wondered what he would have been like back at his school with the same home environment.

Yet for Liam this data collection was not enough; he wanted to share more than the narrow confines he had been given. I don't know what prompted him to share the page from the book but the fact that he did changed the course of my research. In hindsight it was unsurprising that such an emotional child would want to share his story using highly emotional images yet this is what happened. Liam began to use the research for his own emotional development rather than to help me. His desire to share photos after incidents had happened was something I would never have requested as that would have gone against our restorative justice philosophy. Added to this I would have viewed it as being too personal a topic to discuss. Yet for Liam, this is what he wanted to share and, when he did, it was not to gloat 'look at what I have done' but a softer and more gentle, 'this is who I am sometimes'. Liam's approach seemed to be that he either shared all of himself or not at all. He was like a bottle of champagne uncorked; years worth of suppression and frustration erupted into a desire to let his thoughts and feelings flow.

The arrival of Miss Taylor and my move out of the classroom greatly effected Liam. His behaviour, already erratic and aggressive, began to deteriorate with some of it aimed towards me. He became sullen and moody at times often using derogatory language that was personal in nature. I began to realise how fragile and painfully thin his stability with me had been and was grateful that he had the continued love

and support of his grandfather. Yet he largely remained as he had been: cheeky, positive about the PRU and a bundle of energy.

Over the months Liam accessed educational psychology and his next school was identified as being specialist provision. Liam, aware of the process, was apparently unfazed by the developments. He had enjoyed his time with us but had not developed any strong attachments; those were reserved for his family alone. On Liam's last day he left in a whirlwind heading off into specialist provision.

10.2 The story of Marcus aged 8

Within a week of the return of Liam, Marcus' name had appeared on the admissions list as an excluded pupil. His name had been mentioned so many times in Liam's paperwork that I felt like I knew him before I even opened the pages in front of me bearing his name. I sat with a coffee whilst the class was playing outside, relishing the peace and glad that the distant shouts and squeals were someone else's responsibility for 15 minutes. I noticed that he had not had external support and he had not been referred to CAMHS or educational psychology. Over three years there were 60 records of incidents, the earliest being from Reception. Nearly half were for violence whilst the vast majority of the other records were for seemingly small acts of non compliance such as filling his water bottle without permission. I found myself giggling out loud whilst reading the list, for one misdemeanour was changing the lyrics of 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' to make it offensive. I pictured the scene in my head and smiled. It was a rare glimpse of a real person behind the formal story on the page. This one incident instantly drew me to Marcus and I was eager to meet this energetic and quick tongued boy, ready with a slightly sarcastic answer to any reprimand. I saw a little of my own slightly rebellious nature shining out of the page.

At his admission meeting Marcus arrived accompanied by the same teacher who had been with Liam. The teacher took the lead in introductions, "This is Jeanie, Marcus' mum. And this is Marcus." I was astounded. I had expected a brash, confident boy like the image I had built in my head from reading his paperwork. Instead I was faced with a stocky, pale faced boy with wide captivating eyes that drew me in as if they could see my very soul. He spoke gently and politely never once showing any real animation instead maintaining a slightly aloof and detached stance. His mother

was even more distant than he was, barely making eye contact and looking as though she was rather bored with the whole proceeding. Again the teacher asked for a private conversation whilst paperwork was signed, "We have done everything we can for him you know. But we have a whole school full of pupils to think about and he has run out of chances." I bit my tongue not wanting to appear to be unprofessional or judgemental instead nodding my head and appearing to be sympathetic.

Marcus settled into the class and did not appear to show any special friendship with Liam. He remained an enigma; unknowable, reserved, distant. At times a hint of a personality broke out but it was short lived and was quickly pulled back into the folds of his adopted persona for adopted I was convinced it was. Towards the end of the summer term his family attended an open day. A whole tribe sat in my classroom and I asked Marcus to introduce me to them, "This is my sister, Casey." Before he got the chance to continue, his mother quietly muttered, "Yer cousin and yer know it." I was astounded and, wanting to confirm that I had really heard what she had said I asked Jeanie outright, "Cousin? Are you his aunt?" Jeanie looked at me, a half smile playing across her lips as she fleetingly made eye contact, "Yeah, I am and these are his cousins. I've had him since a baby." I felt no desire to press her further as she had clearly resented telling me what she had but then she turned to Marcus and spoke to him directly, "Why are you so bloody quiet? You are a Tasmanian devil at home but you are sitting here like yer dead." As I proceeded to discuss Marcus' behaviour in school, his quietness and distance, Jeanie continued to scoff. As the family departed, Marcus looked at me and then smiled the briefest smile.

Marcus had willingly agreed to work with me on my research but I was skeptical about what he would share due to his reservation in sharing any of his thoughts and feelings. The first data collection confirmed my suspicions. He handed in 5 written pieces, 11 photos from around school and 2 Fisher Price photos. When describing what different people thought about him, he simply used the same words for each box. He also talked about his time at school in relation to how people viewed him, people being angry, and not how he felt. This left me with a dilemma:

- a. Was this what he genuinely thought people's perspectives were of him? In which case he was entitled to share what he did.

- b. Was the 'real' Marcus hiding away inside? In which case I had to respect the fact that this was who he was wanting to present himself as, even if I believed there was more to him.

My feeling, based on experience and knowledge of the context I worked within, was that there was greater depth to Marcus' views than he felt willing to share but I needed to respect his wishes to not use an audible pupil voice as I knew that choosing silence was as much pupil voice as speaking (Chapter 10). The meeting with his family had highlighted how complex his world was and how in control of his emotions he could be. Although I wanted to know more, to delve deeper, that was not the aim of my research. I wanted to hear what Marcus had to say and had to respect what he didn't want to share as much as what he did.

With Liam's opening of the research to being purely pupil generated, Marcus' approach began to change. Marcus' approach to sharing his thoughts and feelings moved away from being written or kinaesthetic and became purely verbal. He would seek opportunities to sit and talk with me often asking that I write something down. Through his conversations a different Marcus appeared contrary to the Marcus of both home and his initial time with us. This Marcus thought very deeply about himself and about other people, he liked talking about ideas and concepts and was incredibly imaginative. Marcus had a deep respect for seeing his ideas written down which had become apparent during my second data collection (Chapter 8). It was as if his inability to record his feelings himself meant that he desired to see them written down for him. He was fascinated by the power of words, that he could say something, watch it being written and then read it back to himself as challenging as that skill was.

Over the months, Marcus opened up slowly and gently like a reluctant clam. One day we were talking about families and he asked me to draw his family tree. Marcus quietly said "Carol is my mum. I see her around town and stuff but she won't look at me. She doesn't talk to me. When I go to me grannies she leaves. I have some some brothers, real ones, but I don't know where they are. They are older. Me mum takes drugs. She left me with me auntie but I call her mum. Me dad is me uncle. I call him dad but he doesn't like it. He says me dads dead. Drowned. Me sisters are me cousins. Casey says she me sister but mum don't like it. I want to know why if me dads dead or not but I'm not allowed." I let him talk till he ran out of words. In the

8 months I had known him, I had never heard him speak as openly about himself. We had reached a point where there was trust enough for him to do so and it made me realise just how much he carried around inside his head; how much confusion, frustration and hurt. It had been misguided of me to have expected him to write this down as part of a PSHCE lesson or share it in circle time; there was simply too much and the issues ran very deep. This one moment created a bond between us that felt important to maintain; I was trusted. Over the weeks Marcus continued to want to spend time with me. Sometimes this was for my research but at other moments it was just to be in my company. However I believe that it was the sharing of my research with him that caused this to be the case.

Marcus became a popular boy as his personality opened up. He was fun. He was silly. He was not afraid to be himself even if his actions were immature. Once he ran around the yard in circles singing, 'You spin me right round, baby. Right round like a record, baby. Right round round round'. No one batted an eyelid. It was simply Marcus being Marcus. He was an unusual and quirky child who stood out from his peers as being highly individual.

With the arrival of Miss Taylor, Marcus' relationship with me gently petered out. He did not bear anger or resentment towards me in the way that Liam had. Instead he seemed resigned to the change as if we had simply grown apart from each other. Marcus continued to be an eccentric young man and I began to realise how much I missed the time we had spent together which had now passed. Marcus was to stay at the PRU for over a year before joining a local school.

10.3 The story of Cain aged 8

On a winter's day the paperwork arrived for Cain. At his admission meeting I was treated by a small boy with a mop of unruly white blond hair. It was poker straight and stuck out at every conceivable angle. He was pale which accentuated the blood redness of his lips. Dark eyes shone out from under his fringe and his face was full of anger. He had been brought by his parents and accompanied by a tiny toddler in an oversized hat who Cain clearly adored, as she was the only person in the room who received a smile from him. The parents fussed and preened over the girl; she was hugged, kissed and spoken to in soft baby tones. Cain was ignored and sat at a

distance from the family group. During the meeting he spoke little. The general tone of the meeting was that of frustration and negativity largely focusing on his parents complete surprise as to why his behaviour was so bad at school and utterly awful at home. During the meeting Cain appeared to be anxious. He spoke if a question was directed to him but he made no attempt to engage beyond the bare minimum.

His paperwork listed a few incidents of violence and aggression which the school had apparently managed well. Since the arrival of a new head teacher, the incidents seemed to have been viewed with more severity. School reported him to be angry and aggressive towards staff and peers alike. He had arrived in Year 1 and had taken a long time to settle in. The paperwork said very little but hinted at much more. I called the deputy head teacher to see if I could find out any additional information. The teacher spoke openly about Cain and his family, admitting his personal frustrations that an exclusion had happened but stating that the impact on others was unacceptable. There were concerns about Cain's safety and well being at home and the family were receiving vast amounts of support through the TAF system; Cain was on the school's Child Protection register and they were increasingly concerned about the situation, "Maybe it will force someone's hand to do something as no one seemed to take our concerns seriously." I pondered this comment and felt frustrated by it: surely this was not the reason to exclude a pupil? The conversation became more general: Cain had very poor social skills and was unable to take part in the simplest of games without shouting and screaming if events didn't go his way; he was often caught trying to abscond from the building or would simply run around causing as much disruption as possible.

On arrival, Cain presented as an angry and very emotional boy. He struggled to accept boundaries and, although he was rarely violent to staff or pupils, he would suddenly flare up with little warning, often turning tables in his wake. Yet this behaviour was only the veneer of a huge emotional well of despair, turmoil and rejection. Cain talked incessantly about how wonderful his family was and how amazing his life was at home. He painted an idyllic picture of childhood innocence and delight which was at odds with the story told at TAF meetings. Here there were two conflicting stories told, neither agreeing with Cain's. For the parents, Cain was wild and uncontrollable; they had tried all that they could but he was hard to like and even harder to love. They had given him up once to Social Services only to collect him the following day. They admitted they had made mistakes in the past but now

they were trying to love him, he wasn't buying it and that was not their fault. For the professionals the story was one of years of emotional instability and neglect. When Cain was a baby, things were alright. Yet as he grew to assert his independence and make his own way in the world, their frustration at his lack of compliance grew. There remained the over hanging threat that they would voluntarily hand Cain over for good.

Although Cain had initially seemed enthusiastic about the research, he chose not to submit any of his written work and often refused to complete it at all. This was not unusual as Cain frequently refused to complete work in lessons and often left the classroom over a minor incident or misunderstanding with a peer. I had to respect his choices even though some of his worksheets were interesting to read. However Cain really enjoyed using the Fisher Price figures and asked to play with them during and after our time together. During his play with the figures he spoke openly about his time at school assigning names to the figures and acting out scenes. Yet when I tried to join in with his play, he stopped talking, packed the toys away and asked if he could leave.

Cain settled down to become a demanding yet eager child who often fell out dramatically with his peers and bore a grudge over several days. When my data collection changed, Cain took the opportunity to ask me to watch his play but never join in. His play often revolved around naughty children, robbers and heroes who saved the day. At times he reached out to me on a more emotional level, leaving me a picture in the tray made with paper and plasticine showing us outside of the Lego house he had created (Chapter 8 photograph taken on the 18.12.12). His incorporation of me into this 'home' I took as a sign of the trust that he had in me and a communication of how he saw our relationship. All of his play revolved around home and family. I began to realise that, for Cain, his permanent exclusion took second place to his feelings about his inclusion in the home environment. The focus of his emotions and thoughts was not on school and might have been the reason why he had not wanted to submit any data during the first part of my research: he was simply not in the mental space to be unpacking his feelings on his exclusion when there was so much else going on in his world.

One day in mid winter things at home came to a head: Cain was absent from school. The taxi driver had called at his house and been turned away by his father. Within

the hour Social Services called. Cain was in emergency foster care as he had been dropped off at a local office the previous night by his father with only the clothes on his back. The family had not been in contact since. Cain was placed in a short term placement and settled in well. He loved having a new bedroom, toys and a dog to play with. His hair was trimmed and he took on a smarter and more mature appearance. His data continued to be focused around the home and often appeared to be a way for him to be processing what was happening in his own life ,as although the characters were not called 'Cain' they were remarkably similar to himself.

Cain finally found a longer term foster placement where he remained for the course of his time at the PRU eventually transferring into a local school with additional support.

Chapter 11. Discussion - Themes From Research

Jan 12	Feb 12	Mar 12	Apr 12	May 12	Jun 12	July 12	Aug 12	Sep 12	Oct 12	Nov 12	Dec 12	Jan 13	Feb 13	Mar 13	Apr 13	May 13	Jun 13



11.1 The use of analytic autoethnography

Right at the start of the research I expressed a concern about writing anything that was narcissistic or self centred (Chapter 2). Whilst the writing took an auto-ethnographic turn I was keen to not end up with a piece that was purely descriptive of a setting or only evocative in nature; I wanted to incorporate elements of both and was keen for the reader to get, as Sikes expresses, a feeling of being a witness to the events that are included (Sikes, 2012), yet I also wanted it to do more. It was crucial that the research I conducted was useful to someone other than myself whilst remaining engaging and opening a window on to a previously hidden world. I wanted to both look at the social work and describe it but also make broader generalisations that would support a wider theoretical understanding (Anderson, 2006). At the outset of my research (Prologue p. 3) I had clear intentions of wanting to explore the journey which a teacher experiences in a PRU. I also wanted to focus on the methodological implications of this as well as the effect upon voice and power within the classroom. The following four themes serve to fulfil both Anderson's and my own requirements.

11.2 The use of stories in self expression and identity

Identity lay at the heart of my classroom practice and had a profound influence on my research both in terms of my understanding of myself as a teacher and a researcher (Chapter 6; research question 2). I came to understand that the social structure that we exist within, such as a classroom, impacts upon our identity (Burke, 2005) although this is not an opinion universally held (Cerulo, 1997). Throughout my time actively researching in the classroom, my feelings of having a shared social identity ebbed and flowed coinciding with the growing strength of relationships (being in the in-group) and then the dramatic change in them when I changed jobs (being in the out-group) (Burke, 2000).

I witnessed the same ebb and flow in the pupils who discussed their exclusion from school in terms of not being with their friends or being part of the wider school community. It has been said that the only way that this lived time can be expressed is through story (Bruner, 2004). My initial attempts to collect data to tell the specific story of their exclusion did not allow for a freedom of self expression for I defined the context. I found that when the pupils were able to tell their story through their own devices, the stories told were a self expression of events that mattered to them; stories that they wanted to tell which were often ethically sensitive (Chapter 6; research question 3). Marcus wanted to discuss his family; Cain wanted to share what 'home' meant; Liam wanted to share his behaviour (see Chapter 8 for more detail). The pupils' story telling allowed them to create what Schiffrin calls a self portrait which was also a means of expressing their identity (Schiffrin, 1996). As discussed earlier (Chapter 10) my grandmother used story telling as a means to both reflect upon her past, to present the perspectives of others and to shape her own identity through expressing multiple identities (Norrick, 2009). I felt that this was no different in young children discussing their exclusion; their stories were a way of expressing who they were (Uszyńska-Jarmoc, 2004).

The pupils had previously had limited experiences of being able to express themselves. For some, such as Liam, the use of his behaviour was a form of self-expression and one that he would later choose to document himself (see Chapter 8). This non verbal behaviour was also a means of Liam being able to communicate who he was to an audience due to it being readily accessible without mediation (DePaulo, 1992). Pupils like Marcus who chose to present with a higher degree of self control were still expressing themselves through behaviour albeit a lack of overly dramatic behaviour; his choice to not act was a form of expression in itself. The permanent exclusion process itself did not give any space for pupils to have any means of expressing what they felt or thought. Therefore their stories, both of themselves and my stories of them, became a way to tell of their experiences and share parts of their identities. Whilst I cannot definitively prove that the pupils experienced a degree of self reflection, I believe that they did and would highlight Marcus' desire to share his life experiences or Liam's willingness to allow his negative behaviour to be highlighted as examples of self expression that may not have happened without the freedom to tell their own stories in their own way. The difference between my first

data collection which I controlled (Chapter 4) and the second which the pupils controlled (Chapter 8) stood in stark contrast to what the pupils wanted to share in different circumstances.

However it was not just the use of stories by my class which was of interest as I was also keen to understand my own stories and identity (Chapter 6). Our use of stories is a means of constantly forming our identity through a process of self editing which means that the 'authentic' self is constantly being redefined (Bamberg, 2011) (Chapter 5). This shaping of my own identity was not of a singular 'identity' but contained multiple identities that were constantly needing to be balanced (Dolloff, 2007). One of my identities was that of being a teacher and the importance of using stories to understand a teacher's professional identity has been discussed as being theoretically justified (Beijaard et al., 2004). My own story, including my stories of being a teacher, could be deemed to be a psychosocial life story due to the importance of social relationships both from my childhood and in the setting of the school where I was working (Peacock and Holland, 1993). This unravelling of my own life story and the impact on where I was working and the young people I was with was a journey of self reflection and gradual understanding of the data I was receiving; it is possible for such biographical data to form part of a higher degree through an interpretive learning process (Stroobants, 2005).

My stories were also a form of my own self expression just as the pupils had also experienced; they allowed me as a teaching professional to share my experiences, thoughts and feelings showing that the identity of being a teacher merely one facet of myself. My research highlighted the impact of my personal life in my professional world (Pajak and Blase, 1989). This led me to question the impact of such multiplicity upon our relationships.

11.3 Teacher and pupil identities - power

The two stories that my grandmother told me were set in the past yet they spoke about the present. The reason I was able to interpret these stories was due to the fact that I had a relationship with the old lady as I was her granddaughter. The impact of relationships and stories has been used within therapeutic settings such as

Narrative Therapy (Richert, 2003; Adler and McAdams, 2007). This approach has enabled me to both understand the past where the stories were set but also their bearing on the present. The same is true for stories that children might tell to their teacher as having a relationship with the person telling the story means that an interpretation of the story is based upon the relationship, their history, and not just what they say in the present; the stories they tell may well be geared for this relationship and would be different if being told to their parent or friend. It was the importance of this pupil/teacher relationship that had become a key research question (Chapter 6; research question 1). Having previously thought of my pupils by 'type' often seeing the veneer but missing the details (Chapter 4) I was mindful during the rest of my research to try and engage with each pupil as an individual and see their individual identities and hear their individual stories. Children and teachers are shaped by their relationships and stories (Clandinin et al., 2006) and it is crucial to understand the uniqueness of each through engaging with pupils in a relationship that is deeper than a surface meeting. When I changed my data collection to be more relationship based, my engagement with the pupils was far deeper and this was shown in their willingness to discuss very personal stories such as Marcus' desire to talk about his family tree (Chapter 8).

This places teachers in an ethically challenging situation for they are in a place of authority in the role of teacher, but was also part of a relationship that is often deeper and more complex. The 2012 Teachers Standards require teachers to:

'maintain good relationships with pupils, exercise appropriate authority, and act decisively when necessary' (DfE, 2011)

The relationships that they establish are not equal and appropriate emotional and physical distance must be maintained. Failure to do so places teachers at risk of misconduct²⁵, often struggling to maintain boundaries (Colnerud, 2006). However teachers are given responsibility for making a range of decisions on behalf of their pupils, especially those who are deemed to be more vulnerable (Greenway et al., 2013). This tension, as discussed in Chapter 3, lies with the fact that pupils are both active and limited participants at the same time (Balen, 2006) and fluctuate between

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/teacher-misconduct>

the two repeatedly during the course of the research they are involved in. This ultimately means that the teacher involved within the research must have a clear awareness of the situation and a good understanding of the pupils they are working with. Therefore, improved teacher/pupil relationships can only lead to more positive outcomes for pupils (Hamre and Pianta, 2006) for their teacher will be in a stronger position to understand their needs and mediate on their behalf. My relationship with the pupils in my class, the gradual development of trust and a willingness to view them as individuals, impacted upon the data I gathered to be more personal and less influenced by my role as a teacher as I was not dictating what or when they should share.

Teachers build relationships that run deeper than those outside of the profession might expect in a day to day classroom environment and there are a variety of reasons for this. Firstly it can be due to personality transactions that are more positive as seen in research on adult personal relationships (Neyer et al., 2014); there are pupils who teachers naturally build a positive shared relationship of understanding. Secondly it maybe due to individual pupils reminding us of ourselves or our own children; it may be that some pupils present similar personality types to the way that we work and understand the world. Whatever the cause, teachers' concerns for their pupils are not simply in the here and now but are also based upon who that young person will become (Uitto and Syrjälä, 2008). Zimmerman's classification of identities is useful (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998) especially for understanding classroom relationships (Richards, 2006). I felt that classroom relationships grew out of Zimmerman's *situated identity* where by we play the ascribed roles of teacher and pupil in the same way that I play the role of customer when I am at the supermarket checkout; this level of identity was the default setting (Zimmerman, 2004) for I act like a teacher because I am qualified as one and in a classroom environment. However my own realisation was that my relationships with my class were at their deepest when I was being fully myself; this is more in line with the notion of a *transportable identity*. This concept allows for features of our identity to be used across a range of social situations. Zimmerman's original concept limited these to three features age, sex and race (Mieroop, 2010) and are relatively easy to assign (Nakamura, 2012). However I felt that there was a deeper level to transportable identity that was more elusive but none the less parts of ourselves that we carried from social situation to social situation: an epistemological belief system.

The concept of an epistemological belief system was influenced by the research of Perry (Perry Jr, 1968) however later research expanded and developed the concept (Schommer-Aikins, 2004) strengthening the links between beliefs, teachers and pupils. Deeply held epistemological beliefs are ingrained in who we are. Therefore they journey with us wherever we go, including from home to classroom.

This understanding of an epistemological belief system becomes crucial when teachers face challenging or emotional events in the classroom which in turn lead to deeper relationships. There are times when outside circumstances affect our view and interpretation of the pupils in our care. One cannot help but be personally affected by knowing events that have happened in our pupil's lives; to know that a pupil has been taken into local authority care; that a close family member has died; that they have been bullied by their peers. However one of the crucial elements about working in a PRU is that the opportunities to build relationships are not only greater due to smaller class sizes, but are also a vital part of the role when working with pupils whose experience of school has often included a break down in a pupil/teacher relationship (Hajdukova et al., 2014). The data from my second collection was testament to the depth of relationship that could be achieved (Chapter 8) and equally how fragile that relationship could be when the environment changed. Questions are also raised about the possibility for such relationships to be formed and sustained in the current educational climate. Relationships require time and a mutual giving and receiving of each other; is there time within a mainstream classroom? What would a teacher have to sacrifice to achieve this. Whilst I do not provide answers I feel that my research data shows the benefits to both pupils and staff of creating a more collaborative and personalised shared classroom.

This duality, establishing good relationships yet maintaining distance, is further complicated for teachers who engage in classroom based research. They often find themselves in the midst of a complicated ethical weave due to this position of professional authority and academic ethical practice (Ritchie and Rigano, 2010). So how can a practitioner researcher reconcile the power imbalance automatically inbuilt into the classroom relationship? Qualitative research has been viewed as a movement away from the seemingly autocratic power held by quantitative research with its aim of being more democratic (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). Whilst I agree that an ongoing reflexive dialogue, as suggested by Yassour-Borochowitz (2004), can

help to empower participants, there is danger in assuming that the relationship between teacher/researcher and pupil/researched can ever become symmetrical and balanced. Iris M Young warns that this is a fantasy for we can never fully understand another's viewpoint (Young, 1997). Instead, as Ford discusses, Young's notion of asymmetrical reciprocity is highly relevant when trying to build the viewpoints of other people in a different situation and she gives the example of the roles of mother and daughter (Ford, 2004). Therefore if one is accepting that teacher and pupil relationships are by nature asymmetrical then we accept that we need to listen to the pupils and not assume that we know. I suggest that this act of listening temporarily suspends the relationship allowing the gulf to temporarily close whilst respecting that a divide remains.

Many decisions made in schools are beyond the remit of a classroom teacher and lie within the authority of the headteacher, an even greater power divide than one found in the classroom. The decision to permanently exclude is one of these. Permanent exclusion from school could be as a result of having over 45 days work of fixed term exclusions (Chapter 4). Other reasons for a permanent exclusion could be a serious breach of conduct or unacceptable behaviour outside of the school setting (Education, 2012). However the wording often appears rather vague with exclusion being the prerogative of the headteacher for pupils who 'misbehave'²⁶. There is no attempt to define this word and the decision making lies firmly with the headteacher even if the decision is appealed²⁷. No legislation requires the issue to be discussed with the young person placing them at a significant disadvantage against the power vested in the headteacher through Government legislation. My first data collection highlighted the lasting impact of such decisions on how pupils viewed themselves and the lasting impact that was felt (Chapter 2).

11.4 Authentic pupil voice

As discussed in Chapter 3, pupil voice is a continuum rather than a fixed concept (Whitty and Wisby, 2007). Some children may have limitations to their voice due to

²⁶<https://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions>

²⁷<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/disruptive-children-new-rules-restore-headteachers-power-to-exclude>

physical and medical reasons such as Autism (Rajeswari et al., 2011) or selective mutism (Muris and Ollendick, 2015). Others may lack a language suitable for the country in which they are in (Ludhra and Lewis, 2011). The largest reason why children are voiceless is simply because they are children; the opportunities for their voices to be heard vary depending upon the social situation they are in (Maybin, 2013). Children are born into a world where adults have the power to make decisions on their behalf.

The age of criminal responsibility is often disputed (Delmage, 2013; Crofts, 2015). Yet in our modern British society we do not view children to be able to take greater control of other aspects of their lives until their late teens²⁸ and until then the balance of power lies with adults. Children who are developing within normal expectations display language skills that develop rapidly during the first three years (Anisfeld, 2014): a parent is the first voice many children encounter and it speaks for them from their earliest days; it interprets babbles and cries and gives them meaning. As the child grows, the parent gives the child greater freedom of choice and voice yet the child's voice remains limited; they do not choose the family holiday or next model of car. Not all children develop in social settings that are supportive of developing voice and are often voiceless within their own families. However there are opportunities where children experience and are supported to develop these skills.

One example is how the medical profession works in conjunction with parents and children to make decisions about their future. There have been moves in recent years to include children's wishes about the type of treatment that they are receiving to support them in developing a sense of self (Hallström and Elander, 2004) and in the UK, children under the age of 16 can refuse consent for medical treatment within ambiguous parameters (Alderson, 1992). In Belgium this opportunity for a child to have a medical 'voice' has extended to discussion about their right to decide how and when to die²⁹.

During the research period I had several experiences where Liam and Cain were asked to share their opinions on their future lives as part of my data collection. I was

²⁸<http://www.fpa.org.uk/factsheets/law-on-sex>

²⁹<https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22029423-300-should-young-children-have-the-right-to-die/>

frustrated with how their opinions were gathered by other agencies and by systems in place at the PRU. Often when outside agencies were involved the pupils were asked very personal questions by people who were effectively strangers. I was concerned that such experiences failed to lead to empowerment therefore adding to the negative affects that the pupils had already experienced. I was also aware that the teacher/pupil relationship was often over looked when I believed it could actually prove to be beneficial (Chapter 6; research question 1).

In the autumn term Liam's social worker called. After some polite formalities she got to the point of the call. A court date had been set and she needed to obtain his views about where he would prefer to live: with his mother or grandfather. I explained what I knew about his desires: "He loves his mother a lot and does not want to let her down, but he is really enjoying living with his grandfather. You may find it better to ask him in a neutral setting like school with an adult he trusts around. He is very wary of social workers and has said that he feels they are out to trick him." My opinion was cut down swiftly. I was informed that the meeting would take place at home with his grandfather present. I explained that this would mean that his brother would also be around and that may cause Liam additional stress. I also mentioned Liam's obvious learning difficulties and his ability to fully comprehend verbal communication. I gave the example of when a member of staff had asked him, "Do you have a brother called Tom, Liam?" Liam replied, "No." Knowing this to be untrue I had reworded the question "Liam. Is your brother called Tom?" This time he nodded and said "Yeah. He's older." I continued to explain that Liam responded well to visual tasks, such as drawing or jigsaws, and that these were good times to sit and talk with him, especially when talking about emotions (Cremin et al., 2011; Tay-Lim and Lim, 2013). My opinion was swiftly pushed aside. She had a way of doing things and was going to stick to it; there simply was not time to arrange anything else. A date was set and she would share her findings at the next Looked After Review. Just what was the point in asking for Liam's opinion if no one was prepared to find the best way of doing it? It was pointless.

The review date arrived and I drove to his grandfather's house. During the meeting Liam was asked how his placement was going and if he wanted to stay with his grandfather a bit longer. Liam refused to answer and asked to go and play outside with his dog. I was left feeling uncomfortable. Firstly, how would the professionals

have responded to Liam's answer if he had expressed an opinion contrary to their legal plans? Was asking Liam genuine or something that simply had to be done? If this was the case then it was purely tokenistic and not genuine (Dockett et al, 2011). Secondly, Liam might not have verbally expressed his thoughts but his behaviour in school and at home had communicated some of what he felt; his opinion was not clear cut and was a very complex message (Arnot & Reay, 2007). After Liam left, I asked the social worker how her conversation regarding residency had gone. She had been unable to ascertain his opinion as he has responded that he wanted to live with both his mother and grandfather hence her need to ask Liam again today. As she had again been unsuccessful she was going to note that Liam was indecisive and leave it for a later occasion.

Reflecting upon both the phone call and my face to face conversation with the social worker I felt personally hurt by the outcome. I felt that I had allowed myself to become too emotionally involved. However I questioned this too for surely Liam's needs mattered and it was my role to support him as well as I could. In the spring term the situation arose again yet this time it was with Cain.

Cain had been in foster care for a few months and had recently moved to a new placement. His newest social worker wanted to ascertain how his placement was going. We discussed how Cain was doing at school and that he was showing signs of being more settled after an angry couple of weeks. The conversation turned to the future and Cain's wishes, "Do you think Cain is in a place yet to think about what he would like to happen? I have only met him once and I thought you might've got a better idea", she asked. "I don't think he has the relationship with any of us to be that open. I mean, he shows his emotions but when it comes to really engaging with them he clams up. We try and give him the space. His past experiences with school were pretty bad. He puts on a show to us, a positive veneer, but he keeps us at an emotional distance and I want to respect that. If I ask him he will probably tell me what he thinks I want to hear as I am his teacher and in that position of power (Ayton, 2012). He seems to have started to form a really positive relationship with his carer. Maybe she is best to ask?"

A few weeks later the social worker called again to update me on the case. She had left Cain to settle in for a while longer and had then approached his carer. She felt

that the carer was the only adult that Cain truly felt safe with so she had decided to use that relationship as her primary means of finding out his wishes. Cain had expressed a desire to return home, but not yet. A few days later he expressed the same opinion to me adding that he was happy at his foster carer's house and was having his bedroom painted. One could have assumed that this was his authentic voice and would therefore be repeated if he was asked a third time. Yet this was not the case. The following day I over-heard him telling a peer that he was going to ask 'them' to stay with his carer till he had left school. A few weeks later his carer wrote a note in his home/school book that he was very emotional as he had told his father during contact that he wanted to come home. This left me thinking about why Cain had responded in such different ways and why Liam had not voiced an opinion which I felt he must have had.

After some time I realised that I was frustrated on several levels. Firstly I was concerned that the pupils' voices would not be heard or that they would not present a genuine voice within my data. Pupil voices are the product of particular contexts and express complex messages (Arnot & Reay, 2007). When the pupils were asked, and by whom they were asked, would affect what they would say. Ayton's discussion about *professional pupils* as opposed to *children* shows the positioning of pupils in relation to their teacher (Ayton, 2012). Although broadening of this concept to include other significant adult/child relationships, such as that with a social worker, has not happened pupils such as Liam might fall into the noted categories indicating differences in responses due to their own positioning and the validation of such by the adult.

Secondly, I felt that the words that they said might not offer a straight forward answer to highly sensitive questions. There is a danger that pupil voice is limited to verbal communication alone which is limiting when we take into consideration the range of non verbal communication that we use in daily interactions (Argyle, 2013). Clark's definition of *listening* is a broader understanding that includes the use of non verbal communication and the construction of meaning (Clark, 2005a). This deeper attention to what pupils are saying is crucial for working with pupils with social and emotional concerns (O'Connor et al., 2011). Deeper listening and hearing of what pupils have to say is crucial although it may be more challenging for teachers and leaders to accept (Bragg, 2007).

Within education the notion of pupil voice has grown over a number of years. Schools developed councils with pupil representatives in order to have pupils making decisions about their educational environment (Rudduck and Flutter, 2000; Cotmore, 2004); these decisions are not the same as an adult might make. Councils can be rather tokenistic, often having more of a negative impact upon pupil well being than if there had been no council in the first place (Lundy, 2007). It is my belief that pupil voice in school is not about pupils making 'real' decisions; it is about allowing pupils to practice and experience having their voice heard and adults giving space and time to listen and support them in developing it. This seems a more honest and open use of voice rather than portraying it as a genuine act of empowerment as the people that continue to have the balance of power are the adults involved in the school council process.

The notion of pupil voice can be complicated and problematic (Arnot & Reay, 2007) which has led to the suggestion that it is too limited and needs updating (Lundy, 2007). Whilst agreeing that the understanding of pupil voice can be limited and that updating the term would be beneficial, I would be hesitant to attempt to simplify it. It is its complexity that makes it authentic; it is the fact that it is constantly shifting and evolving that gives it value and there will always be uncomfortable elements to it (McIntyre et al., 2005). Attempting to quantify and capture pupil voice limits its effect. If we truly value pupil voice, we will need to be prepared for the messiness that it brings. However there are two suggestions that I would add to the concept of hearing an *authentic* pupil voice. Firstly, just as with the notion of transportable identity requiring the notion of a transportable belief system, the same is true for pupil voice. Pupil voice has lost the element of 'belief', be that within a religious framework or outside of it (Adams, 2009) for it is not always trusted as being 'true' without evidence to support it. I would advocate for a view that believes that pupil voice is 'true' in that moment of time in that particular setting and therefore liable to be different in a different setting and moment of time yet still remain 'true'. This would allow for pupil voice to be seen as a constantly developing process and not a fixed entity which would in turn mean that schools would need to accommodate this into what they envisage pupil voice would bring to their setting. Secondly, there is an expectation that allowing pupils to have a voice means that their voice will be audible/ visible or understood through construction.

However it must not be forgotten that just because pupils have a right to a voice, does not mean that they *have* to use it; a right to silence is a crucial part of pupil voice (Lewis, 2010) and we should not press pupils for answers to questions that they do not want to give. This was an important point regarding my data collection; I wanted to ensure that my pupils had a good understanding of their role within my research (see Chapter 3) and be aware that they only shared what they wanted to. This meant that my first data collection was small due to the decisions they made.

The concept of pupil voice is closely linked to that of teacher voice. For an authentic pupil voice to be nurtured and heard they need to be supported by equally well equipped teachers.

11.5 Authentic teacher voice

One of my lasting memories of supporting Liam and Cain was frustration that my professional voice had been silenced and that my relationship with both pupils counted for nothing. I felt that I could have made both of their transitions into the Looked After system smoother due to the insight that I had of what they felt or how they might present themselves. In a serious case review agencies not listening to adults who spoke on behalf of a child was a key finding (Munro, 2011). However as the importance of pupil voice has grown, teacher voice has been gradually undermined (Bragg, 2007; Brindley, 2015). This undermining has affected teachers at both national, local and classroom levels.

Nationally the introduction of the National Curriculum and a centralised approach to teaching was seen by many as containing a hidden agenda to limit the voices of teachers who were mistrusted in political circles (Barber and Graham, 2013). The role of teachers in being in control of their classroom and having professional freedom had ended and a new era of control and conformity arose. It was within this system that I trained to be a teacher, that I learnt how to implement the required methods and plan for the given units. The fact that I once taught a unit about the seaside to a class who had never seen the sea did not matter - that was what the curriculum said and that is what you must do. Anyway, who would I have discussed it

with? Who would have heard my voice? Any concerns I had were silenced by the enforcement of education policy. More recent changes in education policy and direction have been widely dismissed by teachers³⁰ yet even in this case it is the voice of the unions that is most clearly heard as representatives of teachers' voice. Teachers are the objects of educational policy making and not active, voiced participants (Hargreaves et al., 2012). The lived experiences of teachers and their opinions have diminished to the pages of blogs where teachers pour out their thoughts and feelings hidden behind the safety net of anonymity³¹. This is not authentic teacher voice. However it also shows that teachers are not skilled at knowing how to share their voice (Stitzlein and Quinn, 2012) which leads to the question of how this can be better supported. I would suggest that teachers being able to have a nationally heard voice is dependent upon their voices being heard at a local and classroom level.

Teacher voice is also important at a local authority level. From my window on the world I believe that teachers, who may feel comfortable in attending a trade union conference or voting in a ballot, find it harder to have their voice heard at a local level. Within the local authority that this thesis was conducted in, apart from meetings held by trade unions, the only place for teachers to have their voice heard was at local authority arranged events. When staff experienced the dramatic changes to their work life, the support offered was largely from local authority employees whom many felt uncomfortable in talking to. I knew, from my experience both as a teacher and from my data (Chapter 8) that our current way of working had a huge impact on pupil's social and emotional wellbeing due to the relationships that we were able to form. I was concerned that the changes to our structure and the focus on attainment would mean that there would be less room for relationships and social and emotional support. I experienced feelings of continual helplessness, unable to talk about my feelings at home and unwilling to talk about them at work. My voice was silenced through fear. This feeling of fear is widespread throughout many organisations where having one's voice heard could potentially be seen as going against the system turning concerned employees into potential whistleblowers (Burke and Cooper, 2013); there are concerns that an openness from teachers could

³⁰<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-22002527>

³¹<http://www.theguardian.com/profile/the-secret-teacher>

potentially work against them (Goodson and Numan, 2002). The hierarchical nature of educational establishments often means that there is little scope for teachers to have their voices heard as those higher up in the hierarchy take precedence (Alamri, 2015).

The hierarchical nature of educational establishments also leads to problems for teachers having their voices heard at a classroom level. Here teachers can find their voices silenced by leadership (Dana, 1995), leaving them with similar feelings of disenfranchisement within their own classrooms. Yet this need not be the case, leaders who listen to the voices of their teachers raises a teacher's self esteem and motivation (Blase and Blase, 2000). From my own experiences, I had worked within settings where I had felt that I had been heard and others where I felt that I was silenced. Largely these feelings were due to the leadership within the setting and their attitude towards teacher voice. During my NQT year I had a very experienced Learning Support Assistant placed within my classroom. She was an older lady, a few years from retirement, and her initially helpful demeanour became smothering as I was unable to flex my wings or make mistakes. I voiced my concerns to the Senior Leadership Team and was listened to and a solution discussed with them. I felt trusted and empowered.

In many settings since then I have not felt that I have been able to have my voice heard with such openness and support. Instead I have found an outlet for my voice through research (Smiles and Short, 2006). However this is not going to be an appropriate method for all teachers and there have been suggestions of how social gatherings for teachers may be positive for teachers in allowing them to develop their voice and have it heard (Kooy, 2006; Sadeghi, 2014). An alternative suggestion is the role and support that trade unions can give in supporting teachers in having their voices heard (Bangs and Frost, 2012). These, added to the growth of blogs (Stitzlein and Quinn, 2012), social media and the use of narrative research in the classroom (Gough, 1994) may well be the way forward for teachers to have their voice heard. However more research will need to be conducted to understand the impact of such methods on teachers' voices being heard at local and national levels.

The links between teacher voice and teacher empowerment aside, why is teacher voice important? Firstly, as already discussed above, teachers who are able to

express their own voices with competence are best suited to be able to support pupils in having their voices heard too. Secondly, the stories that teachers tell are important; there is a wealth of knowledge from inside the classroom that needs to be 'voiced' (Elbaz, 1991). I believe that my experiences in my two data collections (Chapters 2 and 8) are relevant for other teachers. Hearing these voices can improve classroom relationships, reduce teacher turnover and improve academic outcomes too³². Thirdly, teacher voice is closely tied to teacher identity; the lack of voice and change the way that teachers view their role and can limit their own personal development which was a key area of my research discussed in Chapter 6 (research question 2). Finally having our voice heard, freedom of expression, is a basic human right³³. However the expression of this voice seems to be limited by local and national administrative concerns which can limit a teacher's desire to contribute (Atkinson and Rosiek, 2009).

The concept of teacher voice is not a singular one. It has been acknowledged that it is woven from several different threads which could be loosely called authenticity, the right to speak and the right to have a political voice (Brindley, 2015). However I would argue that an *authentic* teacher voice encompassed all other expressions within a complex and messy system just as we see with the concept of authentic pupil voice.

³²http://www.aft.org/ae/winter2014-2015/kahlenberg_potter_sb

³³<https://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/human-rights/what-are-human-rights/human-rights-act/article-10-freedom-expression>

Chapter 12. Conclusions

At the start of my research, my research questions had been dominated by wanting to be able to record the authentic pupil voice of my class (Chapter 2). During the first data collection cycle I had struggled to develop this further until the focus of my research changed and I was able to define three key research questions outlined in Chapter 6:

Research question 1 - What is the affect of my relationship with pupils who have social and emotional needs on the pupils? On myself?

Research question 2 - How does a teacher's understanding of who pupils are impact upon their classroom practice and identity?

Research question 3 - How can autoethnography and narratives be used to research and share sensitive information when working with pupils who have social and emotional needs?

However, I was also aware that my desire to let the pupils set the research agenda would make answering these questions challenging and that I was likely to end up with several themes based around these questions (Chapter 8). These themes arose due to the autoethnographic methodology and pupil led research used which created space for reflection rather than a systematic approach to answering each research question. These themes will be discussed below with a final summary returning to look specifically at the implications of the research questions, generated through the themes, on my own learning and their relevance for practitioners.

12.1 A thesis as a record of a personal journey

When I had started my thesis journey I had seen it as a logical step - I had already completed three year's worth of study, what difference would three more years make? I had been getting pretty good grades and felt that I had time in my life to dedicate to it especially if I was careful and planned well. I can remember being concerned at a very early stage about how the thesis would all fit together. I wanted

to know what my game plan should be for attacking it, like it was a summit to scale and I was equipped with a detailed map. This would give me a logical and organised thesis that I was in control of; I would design the path I would take down to the minutest detail so that all I had to do was place one foot in front of the other. My original concept was to end up with a toolkit of ideas, from worksheets to activities, that practitioners could draw upon to work with younger pupils with intense emotional and social needs in order to draw out their thoughts and feelings about inclusion and exclusion. I imagined the ideas being drawn together in a book with photocopiable pages so that my experiences became a resource to help other teachers in similar settings or working with similar pupils.

However my thesis was about real people in a constantly changing setting, not fixed and static entities. I was unprepared for the impact of my pupils on the research and ultimately upon myself; I had not planned for the responses they gave, how they spontaneously wanted to share their data, nor for the changes that happened in my professional and personal worlds. Yet it was this desire to want to find space and time away from the pressures and humdrum of education to stop and look, listen and try to understand their lives that lead me to turn the magnifying glass upon myself and try and look deeper into who I was and what of my authentic self I brought to the classroom. In turn this would become a widening of the lens onto teaching in a PRU and life as a teacher (Campbell, 2000b).

The planned for journey allowed the unplanned adventure to develop; it gave a starting place from which to undertake the voyage. Yet I am conscious that this complete change of direction might not have happened if I had not developed an ability to reflect. This deeper reflection was born out of a time of confusion and challenge as had been experienced by other teacher practitioners (Freese, 2006). The outcome could have been radically different; I could have stuck to my existing plan. When faced with the unexpected, and at the time unwanted, additional pieces of paper spontaneously given to me by my pupils I had a choice: I could have ignored them and discarded their presence as being an unwanted intrusion into my grand plan. However the act of reflecting, of stopping and really noticing the present, meant that I was open to engage with what the pupils presented to me.

The impact upon myself in terms of my classroom practice, professional identity as a teacher and my personal identity, has been profound. I realised that my identity as a teacher impacted upon my practice by my prioritising some aspects of my role, such as building pupil self-esteem and developing their social skills, over their academic attainment. This directly impacted on the pupils themselves as they were part of a classroom environment where their personal needs were seen as important and were not facing the pressure to meet academic standards which their mainstream schools had prioritised (Chapter 6; research questions 1 and 2). Professionally my research has enabled me to read widely beyond educational theories about teaching, learning and assessment. I have engaged with ideas and concepts that I have both agreed and disagreed with; ideas which seemed important at certain times in my research but were then dropped or those that quietly grew and stayed. Through self reflection in the form of a journal, I have begun to understand my responses to events that have happened within the classroom with pupils. The combination of reading and reflection has equipped me to understand my own philosophy of education and therefore speak with greater confidence and understanding on national education initiatives. Personally the impact has been to understand myself better through journaling (Moon, 1999). Although some have claimed that journal writing is important for women specifically (Peterson and Jones, 2001), I would argue that it is a powerful tool for everyone. My journals were written with no audience in mind apart from myself and this meant that I had to be mindful of the ethical implications of using any data that I generated (English and Gillen, 2001). However the vast majority of my journal entries have remained private and those that have been written outside of my planned research are fully so. Yet the habit of them has remained and my journal is a constant companion.

12.2 A thesis as a record of a researcher's personal journey

Writing a thesis, whilst naturally a personal journey, is also a foray into research and a space to present a challenge or confirmation of current practice. It is way for practitioner researchers to have their own voice heard and to develop a research identity to the same degree that their professional identity, in my case that of a teacher working with young people with social and emotional needs, is established. I had realised that my understanding of who pupils were impacted upon my practice by

allowing me to bring more of my personal values and beliefs into the classroom. This is important, as I learnt that researchers need to maintain a professional standard as teachers do however they also need to engage at an emotional level with their research in order to manage the challenges it brings (Chapter 6; research question 2). One aspect of my research that I felt highlighted the need for researcher voice to be heard was the use of PVTs in classroom based research. My research highlighted the issues I faced with using PVTs (Chapter 2 and Chapter 4). I had learnt about them whilst studying for an M.Ed and had previously used them for assignments. However the group of pupils who I was researching with were of a much lower cognitive ability than I had previously worked with and had poorer written skills and these two factors meant that their approach to using the method was limited. All three of my case study pupils had completed the PVT yet only Liam had placed his in the research tray.

The lesson which I used the PVT in had needed to be carefully structured in order to explain the process; the pupils had not grasped the concept easily and we had spent time physically acting out what people say and then comparing this to what we hear in our heads but other people cannot. In order to complete a 10 minute written exercise the direct teaching time of the concept took a lesson and a half. This left me with several concerns about the process. Firstly, the pupils had needed support to understand the process that took time and ultimately meant that I had less scope to collect other data. Secondly, the opinions that were shared on the PVTs were severely influenced by the direct teaching that had gone into the process; they were the end result of intensive adult support and direction. Finally the pupils personal lack of response in handing a PVT in added to the fact that none of them selected (or made) their own version of a PVT in the second data collection (Chapter 8), this highlighted the fact that they did not grab their attention.

As a practitioner researcher I found that the use of PVTs to uncover authentic pupil voice when working with pupils with SEN was not easy nor produced any rich data. I also question their use being described as 'inclusive' as I did not find this to be the case ³⁴. From my research I found PVTs to be very *exclusive* as the cognitive ability and writing skills needed to complete them was high. Although using PVTs would

³⁴<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cflat/news/documents/WallPupilviewstemplatespresentation.pdf>

potentially yield high volumes of data from pupils, I do not believe that the data they contain is as rich as that which was developed through the use of ethnography and personal relationship.

My experiences of being a researcher, my authentic researcher voice, is contained within my thesis. My thesis is research born out of a personal drive to complete an Ed.D; it is not funded or conducted with any other view in mind than what I had wanted to explore. A thesis is therefore a unique place within research where the authenticity of what a researcher has to say can be heard and insights offered. I acknowledge that my experience of using research tools such as PVTs was limited to a single classroom however I would argue that the questions raised are potential starting points for further research to be conducted. This is the power of authentic researcher voice.

12.3 A thesis as a record of the pupil's own journey

It was not only myself in the role of researcher who experienced a journey, for the pupils appeared to as well. The research initially started off formally with worksheets and set activities. The pupils involved had a chance to experience a wide variety of materials from Pupil View Templates to the use of photography as a method of recording. Whilst the pupils were used to completing worksheets and sticking in photographs of their school work, the way that these methods were used was for the pupils to share of themselves rather than show their understanding or the limits to their knowledge. The research was about them and their thoughts and feelings: there was no 'right' answer, there was no marking. Whatever was handed in was valued and was kept in the green tray unless they removed it themselves. This meant that they were able to share whatever they wanted without trying to fit into specified criteria for what was acceptable data and what was not. Traditional research methods are often challenging to use with young children with social and emotional needs but the use of autoethnography and narratives enabled them to contribute to the research in ways that they were confident and comfortable in using (Chapter 6, research question 3).

The formal research stage, which lasted nearly a term, gave the pupils chances to practice using a variety of techniques: written, visual and kinaesthetic. The flow of unplanned material was their journey in learning to use different recording techniques, and develop their use, for their own needs. Each pupil had experienced the range of activities I had used but they began to focus on those that were meaningful at an individual level. Marcus, the silent wide eyed wonder, wanted to talk and have his thoughts recorded through my writing. Cain, intense and emotionally young, wanted to play and then ask me to capture this in photographs. Liam, hyperactive and changeable, wanted to record his behaviour, or expressions of his behaviour, in photographs or take his own of areas that he enjoyed (see Chapter 8). This highlighted the importance of giving pupils access to a range of methodological frameworks, including visual and kinaesthetic methods, so that they could choose the form which best suited their needs at that moment in time. To offer only one method automatically limited the type and quality of data that could be collected as I discovered in my use of PVTs (Chapter 2). Allowing pupils to play and experiment with a range of different tools and techniques gave them the opportunity to refine their skills in all of them and have some advocacy in what they were happy with using. This leads to a more authentic pupil voice and richer data (Chapter 8) because they were selecting methods that suited their own individual needs and focus. Implications for research would clearly be opportunities for pupils to develop these skills (which takes time and direct teaching) against the need of the researcher to answer their specific questions within an often set timeframe.

All of the pupils eventually dismissed methods which involved writing. This was not a surprise as each of them struggled in this area often showing frustration that they could not write confidently or adequately express their ideas in written words. Methodologically, communication through writing actually limited my research (Chapter 2) as it proved to be a barrier to communication and therefore a barrier to hearing their voice. The visual and verbal methods used bypassed this concern and allowed them freedom to express themselves in ways which they wanted especially those that they perceived to be fun. There was also the possibility that writing was too closely associated with lessons and the concept of 'school' in general. It has long been noted that boys consistently perform behind girls regarding writing especially when they were on Free School Meals (FSM) or scored highly on the vulnerability index (Jama and Dugdale, 2012). Both Liam and Cain preferred visual methods

which, as noted by Pink, allow participants to create their own dynamic identity when working with a physical piece of technology (Pink, 2013). To me, as an observer, I felt that Cain gave himself permission to play with toys and to use plasticine and the dolls house because he could almost justify his actions by recording them in photographs. I also perceived that Liam was willing to engage more with his negative behaviour and was prepared to discuss its impact on himself and others, by recording it; it showed that he was taking responsibility for his actions and owning up to them rather than blaming others as he had often previously done. In both these cases I felt that the pupils were creating this dynamic identity through being given alternative ways to communicate. It should be noted that Marcus remained interested in writing as a means of recording his ideas and I believe that it was only his lack of ability in his written work that stopped him from using the method further. However this has to remain conjecture as my research ended before Marcus had developed the necessary skills.

Regardless of how they ended up communicating, my research allowed them space within the school day to openly share their ideas when and how they wanted to and it was my classroom philosophy and my willingness to develop a relationship with learners with social and emotional needs which led to an honest and open shared experience (Chapter 6; research question 1). This is crucial for educators to appreciate: the pupils communicated their thoughts and feelings with more confidence and ease when a culture was established within the learning environment that made such opportunities available. The change of role which led to me leaving the classroom as a full time teacher ultimately changed this relationship and the data I was able to collect (Chapter 8). The current primary curriculum uses PSHCE as a timetabled subject to discuss personal and social skills. However my research highlighted the need for classrooms to provide meaningful chances for this to happen throughout the day and this can only happen when pupils have been adequately taught these skills. Therefore the PSHCE curriculum should be broadened to incorporate space for pupils to learn, use and develop the use of these skills. PSHCE lessons should be used to teach and develop the skills of inquiry and self reflection so that this culture can be established.

12.4 Broadening of the concept of a transportable identity

As previously discussed (Chapter 10), Zimmerman's notion of a transportable identity was limited in definition (Richards, 2006). It is my belief that this concept can be broadened to include the belief systems that teachers hold as part of their own professional identity for their personal philosophy impacts upon their practice by creating a classroom space embedded with their own values as well as that of the profession in general (Chapter 6; research question 2). Teachers who use their whole life experience make good teachers (Palmer, 2003) and this must therefore include their beliefs and values as these are integral parts of our experience (Goodson, 1991). If the values we live our lives by are part of our personal identity (Hitlin, 2003) it is logical to assume that, as dwellers in our minds, then we take them wherever we go. We cannot take them off and leave them at will. This notion of belief is an essential part of a teacher's transportable identity; it is who they authentically are.

During the course of the research I allowed myself to be my authentic self, to drop the notion of needing to 'be' a researcher and allowing myself to be the teacher that I already was, gradually understanding that the role of teacher was an intrinsic part of my identity and a vocation rather than a profession (Schwarz, 1999; Nagahara, 2009). By the time the research had started I had spent nearly a decade honing and crafting a skill and many of my responses to the pupils were unconscious acts. I had progressed beyond my early experiences in education where there was a need to 'get it right' and was confident that I was able to do this the majority of the time. Although I welcomed the recognition from others in my school through lesson observations I *knew* that I was a good teacher. The experience of working within teaching in a variety of schools meant that I brought these cumulative experiences into the classroom, which was the focus of my research, and was able to understand the needs of the class who participated within the research. I could observe the changes in the pupils' data and reflect upon it and adapt to it.

This long experience was born out of the fact that I was in a career I was successful in as it was a good fit for who I already was. I had not radically changed in order to become a teacher. Instead I had looked for a career that fitted my existing personality, beliefs and values. If we believe that good teachers are simply being

who they authentically are (Palmer, 1997) called to the classroom through a sense of personal vocation (Schwarz, 1999), then this adds weight to the notion of the transportability of beliefs. Good teachers can be made through adequate support of their whole identity, both personal and professional, by respecting the fact that their identity is transportable between home and school. If we neglect the teacher as a whole and real person and begin to see them only as a facilitator of imparting knowledge and skills then we run the risk of losing the soul of the education system. I suggest that it is these kinds of teachers, those who are being their authentic selves whilst in the classroom, that are best suited to building positive pupil relationships and are therefore better placed to understand pupil's perspectives including those with social and emotional needs. Understanding the world of the classroom is therefore crucial in understanding not only what makes a good teacher but also relating to Initial Teacher Training and how a good teacher can be developed.

Yet, if we acknowledge that teachers have a transportable identity, the same must be appreciated for the pupils in the classroom. When they arrive at school they do not enter a void and leave their authentic selves behind. They bring into the classroom their joy, hopes, fear and anger. In order to support them fully and support them to develop to reach their full potential, the education system must view them too as people with transportable identities. We should allow the pupils to be their authentic selves, to give them the tools of self reflection and self expression, so that they are able to use their self knowledge as they grow into adults. I would suggest that the current curriculum be reviewed to see if time and space for such personal development can be made and that teachers are entrusted with using their professional judgement to create a reflexive environment based upon individual need rather than national expectation.

12.5 The value of insider ethnographic research in education

There is a danger, from those outside of the profession, in thinking that they know what teachers think, feel and do (DFE-00685-2014). Too often political, media and union voices talk on behalf of teachers or explain the role of teachers in British society. It cannot be assumed that teacher voice is inline with these representations. There will be teachers whose opinions are inline with the voices coming from other

sources however there will be a plurality of views that are not heard in mainstream circles. Teachers are not a homogenous group. Despite efforts from recent Government policy to drive teaching into greater competition and accountability than ever before³⁵, teachers are not robots or worker ants and their diversity and unique perspectives need to be heard and respected; their authentic voice is closely linked to their professional identity (Chapter 12.6).

This is where the need for an authentic teacher voice is born, for there are no better experts in their fields than those who stand daily in front of a class full of pupils and teach. The use of research methods such as autoethnography and narratives gives space for teachers to discuss issues within teaching that are ethically sensitive due to the fact that they may be writing about pupils or about their own personal lives and identity. This is important as much of my research data from my journals could not have been shared in its original form (Chapter 6; research questions 2 and 3).

Academic research from those outside of the profession has a place. However even if teachers do read academic papers, and it would be interesting to know how many do, the way that they read them and the importance that they give to them is different from those in academic circles (Bartels, 2003). Academics, as well as politicians and those in the media, exist outside of the classroom. Instead I would advocate that the voices of insiders, such as practitioner researchers, provide a more honest and reliable understanding of the impact of education policy or the effectiveness of specific methods. There is a wealth of experience and knowledge hidden in classrooms all over the United Kingdom yet it is largely unseen. Insider research can show what an organisation is really like, something that an outsider might not as successfully achieve (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). If teacher voice was given a greater status then a true working partnership could be established between those who work within the system and those who maintain it, rather than the uneven playing field that currently exists where ideas are implemented and imposed rather than negotiated and agreed (Apple, 2014).

In order to achieve authentic teacher voice there must be a re-professionalism of the role and it has been suggested that teacher inquiry can be a basis for a democratising of the profession through a better understanding of teacher identities

³⁵<https://theconversation.com/conservative-victory-means-englands-school-system-will-look-like-few-others-in-the-world-41553>

(Sachs, 2003). I would agree that there is a need for a systematic review of the profession. Whilst I am able to see the value of my research at a personal level I am conscious that, by itself, it will have a limited impact upon the teaching profession as a whole. I would argue that the same can be said for any piece of teacher inquiry for there have been concerns raised about how often teachers engage with educational research once they have completed their training (Zeuli, 1994; Borg, 2009). Borg makes a strong case for arguing that most teachers are not adequately equipped to deal with reading or taking part in academic research due to a lack of wider structural support to develop these skills (Borg, 2009). The value of such a combination of professional practice and academic research can be powerful (Schoenfeld, 2014; Cain, 2015) although some continue to doubt that theory and practice can be successfully combined (Álvarez, 2015).

Regardless of whether research and practice can be combined, ethnographic research is an important part of developing teacher voice and professionalism due to its ability to view the experiences of teachers and pupils within classrooms and schools. Ethnography can be used to make broad suggestions about the role of the teaching profession in society, including in countries where governments have allowed their ideological opinions to dominate education (Beach et al., 2014). Ethnographic research enables teachers' real experiences to be brought into the light so that they can be discussed and better understood (Smit and Fritz, 2008). It is this understanding that can be used to develop the profession for the benefit of pupils and teachers alike.

12.6 The use of narrative story telling in sharing ethically difficult information

The ethical considerations of working with young children are vast and even more complex when applied to children with SEND (Harcourt et al., 2011). This issue was discussed with reference to Tony and the ethical minefield surrounding consent and considerations of his own needs (Chapter 4). It developed into a key research question as I realised that the pupils were willing to share a lot of their own lives with me and I wanted to encourage the development of their own voice. However, the information which they shared was highly personal and would mean that not only would they potentially be identifiable but their data also involved discussing people

who were not part of the research at all (Chapter 6; research question 3). The need for tight ethical control and the ethical hoops and restrictions can make research with children a daunting experience.

Narratives, in the form of fictionalised research, can seek to over-come some of these boundaries and further engage teachers in having a voice in educational research (Campbell, 2000a). It is also important for facilitating such research in the first place (Gough, 1994). However an important part of the use of narratives in this thesis is to fictionalise the world of the pupils participating and colleagues without losing the heart and soul of who they are, what they had to say or the circumstances that we were in. This is, as Reed says, the relational aspect of fictionalisation in research (Reed, 2011). The impact of their home lives and previous school experiences are crucial to understanding their understanding of exclusion and in the development of our relationship. Yet this information is highly sensitive and personal with the additional concern of being very specific to the individual pupil. This means that merely anonymising names and schools, 'story telling-lite', is not enough. Instead a whole parallel universe has been created for them which includes some 'real' relationships as well as some created ones and some 'real' events as well as some imagined ones. Yet what cannot be lost is the narrative truth of the story that is being told.

Stories enable us to tell the 'truth' of a situation or relationship whilst respecting the research relationship of those involved (Reed, 2011). I would also argue that fictionalisation and story telling protect participants to a higher degree than anonymising does for as long as the 'truth' of what they say is told, the way that it is told is less crucial. Fictionalisation has been used in professional education stories to anonymise real people, schools and Local Authorities whilst basing them on real people and events (Fellows, 2001). This use of fictionalisation has enabled teaching professionals to write about challenging and emotional situations, to share stories that people have wanted to tell to a wider audience than they have been able to before, yet remain protected and safe (Clough, 2002; Wallace, 2010). However fictionalisation also enables readers to develop a sense of empathy with the characters and their experiences (Fellows, 2001; Wallace, 2010). It was this sense of empathy, of being able to express not only my pupil's stories (see Chapter 11) but the story of my own research journey that became increasingly important.

I was once told by my tutor at university that trying to recreate the real life of the ancient Israelites from reading the Old Testament was about as useless as being able to build the world of the Regency Period from reading 'Pride and Prejudice' (Austen, 2003). Although I agree that it is not possible to reproduce the *whole* of the world, it is possible to experience the portion of it that is being presented and to make inferences about the author's viewpoint and opinions. It is this level of story telling that I have made use of in this thesis. I am not expecting the reader to be able to recreate the whole world of the pupil participants nor of characters like Brian, Charlie and the supervisors who are also fictionalised versions of 'real' people. Instead I want the reader to be able to imagine the story that is presented to them, understanding that it is an attempt to convey deep and personal truths through the use of story.

12.7 Summary

The initial intention of this thesis was to create a tool kit for other practitioners working in similar settings. The change in direction led to a change in outcome with the thesis becoming both a descriptive look at the setting of a PRU from an insider whilst also having a strong analytical element to make broad generalisations. In tackling the research questions, I developed a number of themes through which to share my learning, and I summarise the implications here.

In relation to my first question about pupil/teacher relationships, I have highlighted the benefits of insider, co-constructed research when working with children with social and emotional needs. My experience of allowing the pupils to control the data collection, and willingness to be reflexive adjusting my research to what they were wanting to share, stressed the importance of the relationship between the teacher and pupils in creating a unique setting to explore questions surrounding educational practice. These findings would suggest that this approach is an ethical and potentially more authentic method for practitioners who are delivering interventions aimed at developing pupils' social and emotional needs or those who are responsible reporting on pupil's life experiences to share with multiagency partners or other stakeholders.

In relation to my second research question focusing on teacher identity, I have shown how the use of an autoethnographic methodology, developed from the keeping of research journals, can be used by teachers to engage with their profession offering an alternative voice to that which is generally encountered. The research journals, and the development of their use from recording facts to an exploration of the impact of 'self' on research, enabled reflection to develop on a range of issues at classroom, local and national levels.

Added to this I have shown how teachers' transportable identity, and a carrying into their professional lives of their authentic self, can be beneficial to their teaching practice. My own awareness of my past experiences relating to my family relationships and experiences of education, linked to my own practice. It gave me an understanding that, by encouraging teachers to identify their personal values and previous experiences, we can allow them to understand their professional practice and relationships with pupils in a deeper way. This research adds to the body of knowledge and provides learning about the practitioner/researcher journey that would be beneficial for practitioners who are engaging with further professional qualifications with an element of self-reflection and self-awareness relating to their personal teaching philosophy or those who are reflecting upon their own practice for performance management reviews.

Finally, in relation to my third research question, I have shown how fictionalised narratives can be used by teachers to share and discuss ethically sensitive information about themselves, pupils and colleagues. The pupil's data, which culminated in the writing of the fictionalised stories, were a way to express the 'truth' experienced by the pupils without my ethical values being compromised. For practitioners working with vulnerable pupils and families, my research has highlighted how sensitive information can be shared in a way which protects the anonymity and privacy of those being discussed whilst being able to express the 'truth' of events which have happened.

Chapter 13. The Finishing Line

I am scared. No. I am terrified at times. Terrified of the unknown future. After all of these years I can see the end in sight and I honestly do not want it to come. I like this life. I enjoy this life. Yes, it means that I have had to plan my holidays around research and writing. Yes, it has had an impact on family time. Yes, I have had to postpone activities I enjoyed such as researching my family tree. Yes, I have had to balance my teaching commitments with my academic ones. However I have managed to do this. Not only have I managed - *I have enjoyed it*. I don't want to give up something that I have enjoyed so much, where I have developed and grown so much. I am caught between wanting to complete the journey but equally wanting to stop off and wander along meandering rivers and rest a while to postpone that ending.

This experience of being a practitioner researcher has changed and challenged me. I have found a voice that has something to say about the world of education and I am not afraid to use it. At a time in my career when I felt powerless and disenfranchised I found an outlet and a medium to express myself. For the past six years I have engaged with literature and with new ideas and concepts. Some of these I have disliked but I have begun to understand why I respond in that way rather than simply dismissing them out of hand. Some I have loved and I have brought those ideas into my professional life and shared them with others. Yet just as I really feel that I am coming into being, that I am nearing enlightenment, the end is in sight and I am facing the unknown.

I don't like change.

I was always a planner. I was once affectionately called Stalin due to the five year plans that I worked towards. I tried to map my life out and felt security in a sense of control over the future. I started a thesis as a planner; I wanted to know exactly where I was going, how long it would take and preempt any issues along the way. I felt in control. Then the plan changed and I learnt to reflect and adapt; to allow myself to bob around on the surface and see where the currents took me.

I don't like change. But I think I am better equipped to deal with it than I was before.

Yes I am scared but there is a significant undercurrent of excitement in my fear. I do not know where finishing this thesis will take me but I feel that I am walking out of a long tunnel into an atrium filled with light and many doors. Now I just need to walk the final few steps and try the handles of a few doors.

Appendix 1 - The EX1

Report of Pupil Permanently Excluded

Part 1:

Name of Pupil: Gender:

Address: Date of Birth:

..... Ethnicity:

School: SEN Stage:

Surname and initials of Parent/Carer: Looked after by YES/NO
Local Authority

.....

Date this exclusion commenced:

Current Year Group:

Part 2:

1. Reason for exclusion:

2. **Details of relevant circumstances leading to pupil being permanently excluded.** Please note that full details of relevant matters must be provided, ie events in sequence including the action of pupil, staff and other pupils, including actual words used.

Note: Not all matters relating to the pupil may be considered relevant to the exclusion. These may involve events occurring outside the school day not affecting the school or other staff/pupils of the school, eg other Police involvement.

Part 3: Record of Previous Incidents

Note:

For each event involving the pupil please give details of (i) the event, (ii) the intervention strategy adopted by the school, including interviews with parents, formal warnings, behaviour contracts, short-term exclusions, removal from activities and the use of external agencies and (iii) outcome of action, eg any subsequent improvement or lack of.

(Please attach the latest Pastoral Support Programme)

*** Additional pages of Part 3 may be used if necessary**

Part 4: Other Details

- (i) Curriculum being followed by the pupil. (Please give details as to examination courses being followed in the case of Year 10 to Year 13 pupils, any special courses being taken, any withdrawal from particular classes or subjects and any additional teacher support given.)

- (ii) Pupil's Achievements

- (iii) Head Teacher's general comments concerning the pupil (if any)

Date: **Signed:**
Head Teacher

Appendix 2 - Academic Profile

Permanent Exclusion

Academic Profile

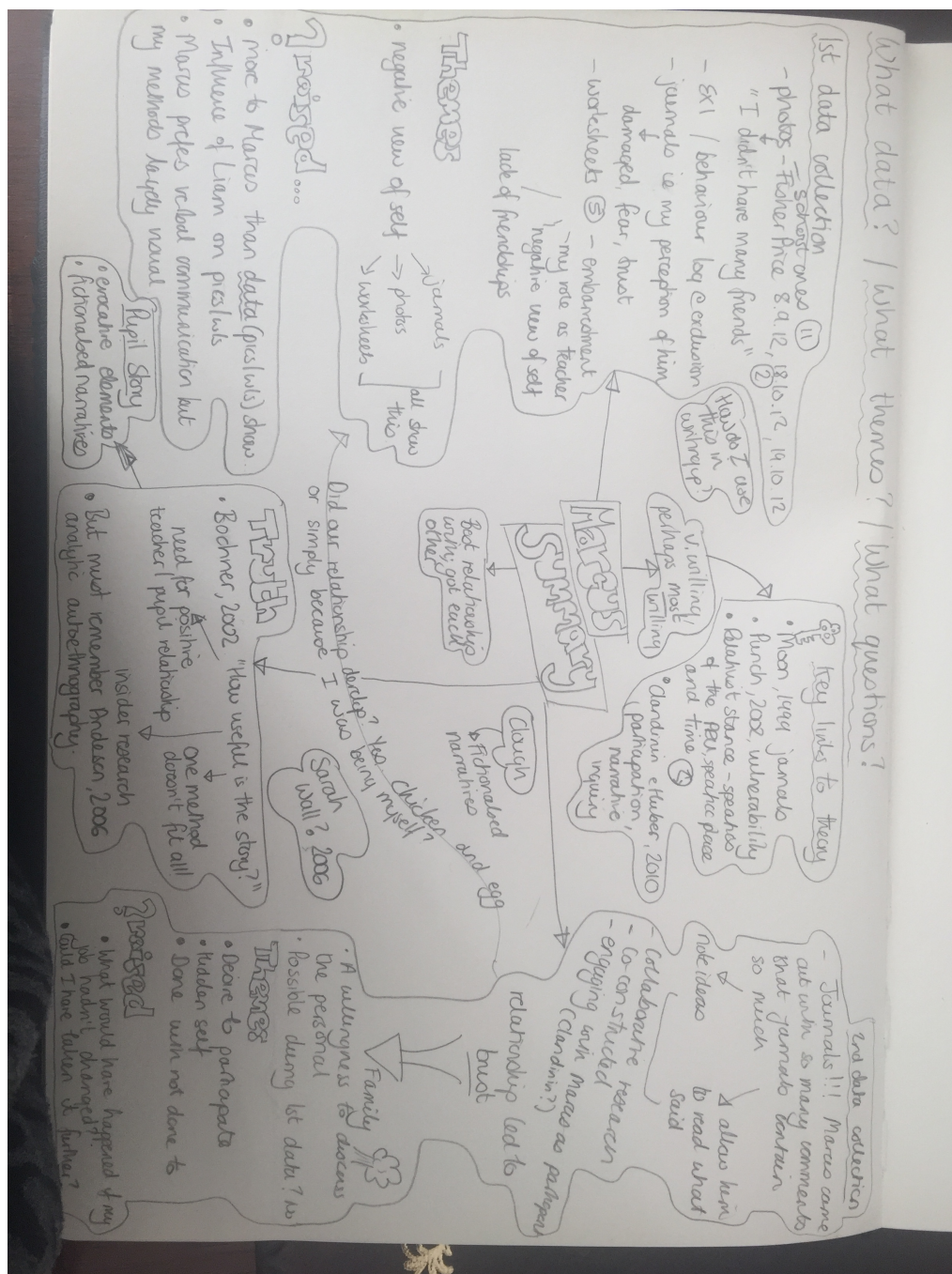
Key Stage 1/2					
Reading Age Tests Used		Key Stage 1 SATs Results		Key Stage 2	
Spelling Age Date Last Tested		Predicted SATs Results			
		English Maths Science		English Maths Science	
Classroom Conformity					
Key Stage 3		Key Stage 4			
Current National Curriculum Levels		Subject	Exam Course & Board	Predicted Results	KS 3 SATS Results
English		English			
Maths		Maths			
Science		Science			
ICT					
Technology					
MFL					
History					
Geography					
RE					
PE					
Classroom Conformity		Classroom Conformity			

Appendix 3 - The Pupil Profile

Permanent Exclusion Pupil Profile

First Name(s)	Family Name	DOB	Year Group	Ethnicity	UPN	Gender
Name of Parents/Carers			Current Address			SEN Status
Address (if different from pupil)			Postcode			
Telephone Number Mobile Number			Telephone Number		School Contact	
Excluding School		Date Admitted	E-mail Address		SENCO	
Reason for Exclusion						
Previous Schools						
Is the pupil Looked After? Does the pupil have free school meals?			Is the pupil on the Child Protection Register?			
Name of Social Worker (if applicable)						
Attendance over the last year (%)			Details of health related issues			
Possible Attendance Actual Attendance						
Peer group relationships			Pupil/Staff relationships			
Home/School relationships			Other Agency Involvement			

Appendix 4 - Visual pupil summary



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